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Le Jourdain
Supplément en français du Star

Une réforme
souhaitée de la
loi électorale

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After the Hebron deal

Observers warn against going into final status talks too soon

By Raed Al Abed
Star Staff Writer

ALTHOUGH CELEBRATED by the world as a major breakthrough in the stalled peace negotiations, not all Jordanians, and Palestinians for that matter, are happy with the Hebron deal, which was signed and sealed last week. As the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships attempt to explain the benefits of the deal to their people, the general belief in Jordan is that the deal had greatly encroached on Palestinian historical rights and mostly serves Israeli interests.

On the ground the deal divided Hebron into two parts, (H2) the old city of Hebron where 450 Jewish settlers reside, and also where the Ibrahim Mosque and other Islamic sites are situated. These areas form 20 percent of Hebron and will remain under Israeli control until their fate is decided within the coming three months. The remaining 80 percent (H1) of the city was handed over to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) earlier this week.

"The Hebron deal is aimed at giving [Binjamin] Netanyahu justification for accepting what was accepted previously, but this time it is at a better condition," said Labib Kamhawi, a

LURIE'S WORLD



political commentator, and a critic of the Oslo accords on which the latest deal is based. "The agreement means that the Palestinians had to accept more losses than they were willing to accept under the previous Labor party government," he added.

In the light of the unequal

balance of power, the deal is considered by some as an important gain for the Palestinians. Hebron joined the other seven Palestinian cities—labeled (A) in the Oslo II accord.

"We should not underestimate the return of 80 percent of Hebron to Palestinian control,"

said Mr Nawaf Al Zaro, a researcher on the Arab-Israeli conflict. "I do not say the city was liberated, but I would say geographically it is now linked to other Palestinian cities, this means a lot."

Some like to describe the current status of the peace process as "peace in pieces" referring to the A, B, C areas that divide the West Bank and Gaza Strip like a jigsaw puzzle. It was agreed under the Oslo agreements that these areas must be handed over to the Palestinian National Authority before March of this year. But the Israeli side, since the victory of Likud last May, has been engaged in stalling tactics.

Leaving 20 percent of Hebron under Israeli occupation makes Palestinians suspicious of Israeli intentions and adds a new obstacle to the peace process, which would definitely cast a shadow on the final stage of talks.

Furthermore, concerning the (B) areas there are 417 Palestinian villages which are still under Israeli military control, while the PNA looks after the civil side. The (C) areas are supposed to be "unpopulated" Palestinian lands and where Jewish settlements are built. However, these areas should be

handed over to the PNA by March, according to Oslo II. The imposed Israeli obstacles are clear despite prior agreement between the two sides. Like, the Gaza port and airport, Israel insists on managing the posts of director and maintaining a full Israeli security control in both. The so-

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Weather Outlook

Snow is expected to fall on elevations of 1000 meters above sea level Thursday and Friday as a result of a cold air mass accompanying a depression centered over Syria, according to the weatherman. Rain storms accompanied at times by lightning and hail are expected. Temperatures will go down noticeably (3C to 7C) and the winds gusty. The weather should improve by Friday evening.

Jordan-Iraq trade protocol renewed amidst hopes for a new chapter in relations

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

IN A bid to end a dispute over their tense political and economic ties that marked the last few months, Jordan and Iraq finally signed the oil agreement and renewed the trade protocol for 1997. The Higher Ministerial Committee that comprised representatives from the two countries managed to turn over a new leaf in their relations as they agreed to raise the new trade protocol, settle debts and increase the price of Iraqi crude oil exported to Jordan.

The oil agreement also stipulates boosting cooperation between Jordan and Iraq in the field of oil drilling, excavations and exploration together with exchanging expertise to build a refinery in Aqaba.

After his return from Baghdad, Ali Abul Ragheb, minister of trade and industry said that 1997 trade protocol was increased from \$220 million annually to \$255 million, a rise of \$35 million.

The two sides also approved a rise in the Iraqi crude oil price from \$15.25 per barrel to \$19.10 bearing in mind that the market price is \$25 per barrel. Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, dur-

ing his meeting with Abul Ragheb and Hashem Dabbas, minister of energy last week assured them that Iraq increased its crude oil and hydrocarbons donation to Jordan from \$250 million to \$300 million this year.

Early this week, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti met the Iraqi Deputy Premier, Tareq Aziz, and both stressed the need to boost inter-Arab economic ties and put aside political differences to face future challenges.

Kabariti and Aziz also spoke about intensifying efforts to pave the way for the complete lifting of UN sanctions imposed on Iraq since 1990.

While economists point out that the increase in Iraqi oil exported to Jordan would cost the Treasury an additional \$70-75 million, Marwan Al Muasher, minister of information said the oil agreement concluded with Iraq is acceptable and balanced.

However, some concern was expressed. Muasher pointed out that the accord will force the government to look for alternative measures to cover the price hike. But he stressed that no steps have been taken so far.

Trade relations between



Aziz

Jordan and Iraq are not restricted to the protocol which is renewed annually. In the light of the implementation of the oil for food formula that was signed between UN and Iraq, Jordan's economy can benefit greatly. It has received the official approval to provide Iraq with basic foodstuffs and pharmaceuticals as stipulated in the deal, Abul Ragheb said.

He added that Iraq will import 250,000 tons of these goods via the Aqaba port and within the coming few months.

The Governor of the Cen-

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Sudan rebels claim to make inroads against government

By John Daniszewski
LA Times-Washington Post
News Service

CAIRO—Sudanese rebels claimed Tuesday to have killed hundreds of government troops and pushed to within 40 miles of a key hydroelectric dam in a mushrooming military campaign to topple Sudan's Islamic government, long accused by the United States as a sponsor of global terrorism.

The offensive that began nine days ago has spread quickly along a 400-mile front, raising questions about whether an alliance between Arabic-speaking opposition groups from the north and black African rebels from the south will spark a mass uprising against Sudanese President Omar Bashir and the country's unofficial leader, Parliament Speaker Hassan Turabi.

The Khartoum government, shocked by the sudden threat, blames its predicament on an international plot by the United States, Israel, Eritrea and Ehi-



Bashir

opia that it says is aimed not only against Sudan but against Islam itself. It has called upon large numbers of volunteers to rush to the fronts in the east and south of the country, while last week launching urgent appeals across the Arab world for help.

But Sudan's special envoy to Egyptian President Hosni

Mubarak went away disappointed, with Mubarak calling the fighting an "internal affair," not a foreign invasion as Khartoum contends.

Adding political pressure Tuesday, Sadek Mahdi, the ousted Sudanese prime minister who recently made a clandestine escape from Khartoum, called for a popular uprising and encouraged the army and police to defect.

The latest fighting brought rebels to within 40 miles of Damazin, site of the Roseires Dam in southeastern Sudan, which provides 80 percent of the electric power for Khartoum, said rebel spokesmen in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea.

The claims could not be independently verified. Rebels in the northeast also are said to be continuing their efforts to cut the vital supply road between Khartoum and Port Sudan on the Red Sea.

Fighting was taking place within 300 miles from the capital, the rebels said, and 1260

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President Bill Clinton dances with first lady Hillary Clinton January 20, as one of the many inaugural balls following his swearing-in for a second term in office that will usher the US into the 21st century. UPI

Israel has muted response to S. Africa arms proposal

By Dele Olojede
LA Times-Washington Post
News Service

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa—When a proposal by South Africa to sell \$650 million worth of high-tech tank firing systems to Syria became public knowledge last week, the news set off verbal contretemps between the US government and Pretoria, creating unusual turbulence in otherwise smooth relations.

But the reaction was more muted from Israel, which might have been expected to be far more alarmed at the prospect of South Africa helping its sworn enemy to potentially achieve rough parity in a tank battle. In contrast with the US State Department, which threatened to cut off \$82 million in US economic aid to South Africa, Israeli officials merely expressed "concern" that the transaction, if it were to go ahead, would be unhelpful to prospects for Middle East peace.

One reason for that low-key response would appear to be the distinct possibility that Israel helped South Africa build the weapons system in question—an electronic guidance system that could be used to upgrade Syria's aging Soviet-built T-72 tanks, according to a report last week in the Israeli newspaper Yediot Ahranot. The equipment would enhance the capability of the Syrian tanks for precision firing even in the dark, as Israel's armored divisions already can.

Israeli officials have traditionally refused to comment on the nature of their military cooperation with South Africa during white minority rule, and Victor Harel, the Israeli ambassador to South Africa, reiterated that position Friday in an interview, conceding only the possibility that Israeli technical assistance might have helped South Africa develop the tank firing system.

"One would assume that since it is very high technology, there might be some element of Israeli know-how" involved, he said.

Official denials notwithstanding, Israel's close collaboration in developing military technology with the former apartheid state is by now well known, and is at the heart of Israel's uncomfortable—though not unfriendly—relations with the new black-

ruled South Africa. While much of the world isolated apartheid South Africa as a pariah state, placing a comprehensive arms, economic and diplomatic embargo on the country, Israel became South Africa's closest military and security ally.

In part because Israel was itself largely isolated as a result of an Arab-led boycott, the country appeared grateful to find friendship anywhere it could, including from South Africa. Over at least two decades through the end of the 1980s, Israel helped South Africa develop a flourishing arms industry, and today the country seeks to be a major arms exporter, counting on potential annual sales of between \$1 billion and \$3 billion by the end of the decade.

Israel was by no means alone in flouting the international embargo. Iran, which has now closely aligned itself with the government of President Nelson Mandela, was the principal oil supplier to the white regime. Even some African countries, such as the Ivory Coast, traded under the table with Pretoria.

But Israel attained the distinction of forging a close military relationship with the former regime, not just an economic one. "Obviously Israel did exchange a lot of military information and technology with South Africa," said Bill Sass, a retired brigadier from the South African army who now is a fellow at a Johannesburg military think tank, the Institute for Defense Policy. "One result is that the South African arms industry is far more geared toward improving, modifying and extending the life cycle of old equipment, such as this conversion kit for old tanks."

In addition to upgrading the French-built Mirage fighter jets, manufacturing the Rooivaak attack helicopter that even some European forces have expressed interest in buying, and developing effective delivery systems, including the so-called super guns, South Africa is widely believed to have obtained its nuclear technology from Israel. Frederik W. de Klerk, the white former president, has confirmed that South Africa secretly built at least seven nuclear warheads, although he said all seven were destroyed in the late

Rumors of Romanov return thrill Russian monarchists

By Lee Hockstader
LA Times-Washington Post
News Service

MOSCOW—It's the fondest hope of Moscow's most wild-eyed street protesters and a cherished dream for a handful of nostalgia buffs who trace their ancestry to pre-revolutionary Russian nobility. But is it possible that Boris Yeltsin, too, wants to restore a role for the Romanov dynasty as Russia's official imperial family?

Under a front-page headline—"Yeltsin Welcomes Back Heir to the Czar"—Britain's Daily Telegraph reported on 31 December that the Russian leader had signed a secret decree to recognize Grand Duke Georgy Romanov, teenage heir to the Romanov dynasty, as head of Russia's imperial family. Grand Duke Georgy, who has visited Russia a handful of times, is a 15-year-old who

lives in Madrid, has been educated at English and French schools, speaks halting Russian and has a fondness for martial arts. He is the great-great-grandson of Alexander II, a 19th-century Russian czar.

The newspaper, citing an unnamed Kremlin source, said Yeltsin plans to welcome Georgy along with his mother and grandmother back to live in Russia early this year. The family—which has been living in exile since 1918, when the Bolsheviks executed the last czar and his immediate family—would be granted a "purely ceremonial" role, it said.

Impossible? Sure. Immediately denied by the Kremlin? Of course. But the report has nonetheless captured the attention of the Russian media and thrilled Russian monarchists. If the

Romanovs are restored as Russia's imperial family, some say, Russia will finally have the unifying national idea it so obviously lacks now.



The monarchists could be coming to rule Russia again!

"There is a kind of ideological vacuum that is the result of the Communist regime," said Duke Vadim Lopukhin, a leader of Russia's Nobility

League, a group that traces its ancestors to Russian nobility. "There is no national symbol: that's why the family's return could play a positive role in stabilization. They could become a symbol, an ideal to live by."

That, said the Telegraph, is exactly the idea. Yeltsin himself complained last year that Russia—whose national anthem has no lyrics, whose schoolchildren search vainly for heroes—is a country in search of a national idea. Ever since, newspapers have been running contributions from readers volunteering their thoughts on what the new Russia should be about.

But it has been easier to identify what Russia does not believe in than what it does. Yeltsin himself is generally reviled. Mikhail Gorbachev, his Soviet predecessor, is widely regarded as a national joke. Lenin is out, and so is Stalin. Communism is a sour memory, but democracy in its current, twisted, uniquely Russian incarnation has inspired no passion in the Russian body politic.

So why not monarchy?

Well, plenty of reasons.

For one thing, there is not exactly a popular outcry in support of a Romanov return. When Georgy took a riverboat tour down the Volga in 1993 with his mother, Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna, and his grandmother, Leonida Georgievna, they were ignored virtually everywhere. What's more, Maria Vladimirovna committed the unpardonable gaffe of neglecting to cover her bouffant hairdo when she visited a Russian Orthodox church near the city of Kostroma.

"Russia has always been united not on the basis of a national idea, but on an imperial idea, which presupposed that the state was superior to society," Igor Kiyamkin, a sociologist, wrote in the newspaper Kommersant Daily last month. "(But) the peculiarity of the present moment is that for the first time a relative majority does not want to return to taking orders from the state. The priority now is personal interests and the interests of the family."

Masha Lipman, deputy editor of Itogi, a weekly news magazine, scoffed at the idea of reinstating the Romanovs in any capacity. There is nothing interesting about the Romanovs, nothing heroic or extraordinary that would lend them prestige or save them from

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Ramadan

A time for spiritual devotion

By Lana Tabba's
Special to The Star

BEGINNING WITH Gabriel's delivery of the first divine words from Allah to Prophet Mohammed, Ramadan is the holy month of fasting and religious worship for Muslims. Ramadan is felt in every aspect of our daily lives, for both Muslims and non-Muslims, in its variety of rich social traditions that are translated into modern life and culture.

For Muslims, Ramadan involves refraining from food and drink and strictly adhering to Islamic teachings from sunset to sun-

down, which requires a great deal of self-restraint. Fasting itself has its positive effects on healthy people and those with certain illnesses. For those who cannot fast, they are to compensate at a later time. If unable, however, they should pay a meal's worth of money for every day they do not fast.

During Ramadan, Amman takes on a distinct identity. Streets close just before *Iftar*, the breaking of the fast, and open later on. At *Iftar*, streets become virtually empty and members of the family, who were always too busy to sit together, gather around the table and wait to hear the sundown prayer, or 'maghreb', in order to fill their empty stomachs.

According to Islamic tradition, the *Iftar* meal usually starts with dates and then with soup, that is easily absorbed by the body. Some Muslims then go to the mosque for the sundown prayer and then continue their meal.

Unfortunately, some Muslims develop bad habits that Islamic regulations condemn during Ramadan. For some, it involves hiding in toilets to smoke, or hiding behind doors and corners to eat. Irritability and nervousness is a common behavior for those who consider fasting a social act rather than a religious one. Long sleeping hours and spending too much time watching TV in order to bear the fast is also common instead of spending time in a productive manner.

According to Mr Raymond Abboud, a civil engineer, Ramadan is basically an "attitude," a month to be peaceful with oneself, which most people do not experience. It is an event to bring one closer to Allah. As he states,

"Muslims should be tolerant and willing to accept things in a peaceful and not in an antagonistic manner. As a Muslim in that month, one should be more forgiving towards bad attitudes than anyone else." He added that people use Ramadan as an excuse for not performing their daily responsibilities.

Dr Ghazi Mutie, an obstetrician, views the idea of Ramadan as a "spiritual devotion", a time for charity, or *zakat*, time to feel with the poor and get closer to friends and relatives through visits and invitations.

Mr Abboud mentioned the fact that Ramadan is very much defined within a period of time; at around nine everyone goes to work, at two everyone moves out and this itself imposes havoc which is clearly seen in drivers' "restless attitude".

Regarding social activities after *Iftar* in Amman, coffee-shops and restaurants, furnishing with bubbly, offer a variety of Middle-Eastern drinks, like Souse, Kharrub and Jallab, and oriental sweets, the most common being Qatayef stuffed with cheese or walnuts. People are seen playing cards everywhere outdoors, while others prefer to stay at home and watch television, that offers a wide variety of programs to suit every taste.

Commenting on the outdoor social activities that take place during that month, Mr Abboud said that it is good in a way that there is something outdoors for the person to do, but it is really "more materialistic than social, imposing an additional burden on the parents in order to meet with this tradition." On the other hand, Dr Ghazi inquired why do such social activities only take place in Ramadan.



Blowing the hubbly-bubbly in one of the cafe's in Amman

As with regards to the positive effects of Ramadan on health, Dr Ghazi stated that it is beneficial to those suffering from fat-related, gastric and intestinal diseases and most of all smokers. "By religion," he added, "certain people are allowed not to fast, like those on regular medications, those with ulcer and kidney diseases." Travellers and pregnant women are included too, but must fast later on.

The following day, an hour or so before dawn, Muslims eat a small meal, that is also part of the Islamic tradition,

called 'suhour', giving them enough energy till sunset.

The holy month ends with the *Eid Al Fitr* feast, where Muslims return to the original lunar calendar.

In the earlier days, as Mr Abboud stated, there were better communications in Ramadan where everyone associated oneself with it. Nowadays however, "individualism prevails".

The traditions of Islam are in fact useful if followed correctly, aiding Muslims at the end of the day to get the most of this holy month. ■

Observers warn against going into final status

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called "Safe Passage," which links Gaza with the West Bank, is ready for use, but Israel is also delaying its opening. This is in addition to Palestinian prisoners still being held in the Israeli jails, which according to Oslo II should have been released shortly after the signing of the agreement in Taba two years ago.

"The Israelis fear that if they pull out from the B and C areas, the majority of Palestinian lands would be controlled by the Palestinians themselves," said Ghazi Al Sa'di, an expert on Israeli affairs. "The Israeli aim behind the delay is to achieve more concessions from the Palestinians in the final stage of negotiations," he added.

Observers are worried about the future of the 20 percent of Hebron which remain in Israeli hands, however temporary this may seem. Likud will delay implementing other agreed upon obligations in order to make the current Hebron settlement a permanent one.

The 80 percent of Hebron which was returned to the Palestinians is part of the Likud program, so we can not really say that Netanyahu has changed his extremist ideology," said Al Zaro.

In this respect "it must be made clear that all what took place during the past three months was reflections not negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis," said Kamhawi. "It was simply a reflection of the Israeli to dictate its points on the Palestinians."

Added to this is that the coming agenda is seen to be even more complicated and possibly more confrontational.

In the final status talks that are set to begin sometime this year, negotiators are turning their attention to the difficult issues which they agreed to save for last: Palestinian statehood, boundaries, Jewish settlements, Palestinian refugees, and the most intractable of all, occupied Jerusalem. But Palestinian negotiators, observers argue, have to solve the dilemmas of the A, B and C areas before moving to the final talks.

"It is unwise for [President] Arafat to raise the issue of the final status talks now," Kamhawi argued. "He is more weak than before, the Palestinians are more weak than before, the Arabs are more fragmented than before, the Americans are more blind in supporting Israel's right-wing government."

Others are fearful also. They believe that the performance of Palestinian negotiators alone in the final status talks will not be effective.

"There should be a strong Arab stand to back up the Palestinians and the international community has to support Palestinian rights on their land," Al Zaro maintains.

For many Palestinians it is a great national achievement to negotiate with the Israeli occupier. "Our presence on our land is an effective element in the negotiations," said Al Sa'di. "We have to prepare ourselves for an uneasy battle of negotiations. We also have to prepare our people to possible confrontations with the Israelis."

Any discussions of the final status talks at this stage would mean that Palestinians would have to succumb to the will of the Israeli right, observers argue. "If the Palestinians can't force the Israelis to respect an agreement that was reached with the Labor government, how will they force the present Likud government to respect the [Oslo] guidelines of the final status negotiations?" Kamhawi asked. ■

GAM prepares for a festive season

AMMAN (Star)—In celebration of the holy month of Ramadan the Greater Amman Municipality is preparing to hold in the last 10 days of Ramadan a set of religious and cultural events, said Fala Al Umoush, general secretary of the Municipality. He said during a press conference held last Monday, that the activities will take place at Al Muhajerin and Ras El Ein area near the newly-established City Hall.

The event will be held in an attempt to link the past with the present and revive the traditions of Amman.

The activities were supposed to take place earlier this week but "due to weather conditions" the municipality postponed them.

A number of activities will be presented ranging from religious singing groups and children games, to intellectual seminars, art exhibitions and a book fair. Al Umoush said that the area will be wholly lit at night and folklore groups,



The newly-built City Hall at Ras Al Ein area

mainly the dabkeh, will present their art.

Al Umoush added that Arab and Islamic activities will be included. The participating groups will be from Oman, UAE, Yemen, Sudan and Malaysia.

The lectures will focus on the role Amman played since it became the capital of Jordan.

Two lectures are titled "Amman in the Novel" and "Amman in the Press." The renowned Arab novelist Abd Al Rahman Munif will give a lecture on his book *Amman: A City's Biography*. Also the Jordanian novelist Ziyad Ouseim will present for his book *Al Zabbah* that talks about a certain stage in Amman's history. ■

Sudan rebels claim to make inroads

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government soldiers have been killed, rebel commander John Garang has told reporters.

But Gen. Mohamed Sanoussi, the Sudanese Army spokesman in Khartoum, said the situation is calm and called rebel claims exaggerations.

For 14 years in Sudan, black rebels from the south, mainly Christians and followers of traditional African religions, have waged a ragged, little-noted civil war against the Arabic-speaking Muslims of the north.

In recent months, however, a new military alliance has formed between the southern forces, led by Garang and his Sudan Peoples Liberation Army, and Arab dissidents from the north. This new coalition, the National Democratic Alliance, has established its headquarters in neighboring Eritrea. It says it seeks a liberal democratic government, a secular state and a plebiscite for the southern Sudanese to decide whether to stay in a unified Sudan.

The State Department has labeled Sudan a pariah state, asserting it sponsors terrorism

worldwide. US officials have denied they are behind the anti-government alliance.

Sudan has been a sanctuary and training base for the wealthy Saudi radical Osama bin Laden and his followers, suspected by the United States of involvement in a number of terrorist operations worldwide. It also gave a home to the long-time fugitive known as Carlos the Jackal, though the Sudanese later turned him over to French authorities.

Egypt accuses Sudan of continuing to shelter these men responsible for an unsuccessful 1995 assassination attempt against Mubarak in Ethiopia and of giving support to Islamic radicals battling Egyptian authorities and staging periodic attacks on tourists since 1992.



His Majesty King Hussein receives the Sudanese Minister of Justice, Abdel Basset Sabdar, Monday. The minister carried a message from Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al Bashir to King Hussein. The meeting was attended by HRH Crown Prince Hassan.

Despite Mubarak's known antipathy toward the Sudanese government, most Arab commentators predicted that he would be sympathetic to Sudan's appeal for help in crisis, out of fears that rebel vic-

tory would partition Sudan and endanger Egypt's allocation of water from the Nile.

But Mubarak disclosed Sunday he had turned down the appeal. ■

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Jordan-Iraq Trade protocol renewed amidst hopes

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trial Bank of Jordan, Ziyad Fariz described the trade and oil agreement with Iraq as a positive step to enhance ties and establish sound relations.

"The rise in the trade protocol is balanced with the hike in oil prices at the spot market, as well, it suits the increase in the local consumption of oil by-products," Fariz added.

However, other economic experts point out that it is beneficial to raise the volume of the trade protocol with any country. "Economically, this is essential, but the issue is whether we have the ability or potential to handle the protocol and move on successfully," Munir Hamaneh from Jordan University told *The Star*. He continued to say that our industry and economy will benefit from the increase in this protocol, as they will be able to export more products to Iraq and thus get more gains.

Hamaneh describes the Iraqi oil prices to be very reasonable, "we are getting half of our oil imports free and the other half at preferential prices, thus, the expectations concerning any future rise of fuels in Jordan are baseless."

The price of crude oil is still very reasonable if compared with the price of fuels, according to Hamaneh.

However, this is not the view of Adnan Al Sallakh, director general of the Export and Finance Bank.

"The ties with Iraq have become more friendly and warmer, but I believe that the price of fuel in Jordan will be soon going up, as the government is expected to adopt certain measures to compensate the oil increase and find other alternatives to avoid the burden of the additional \$75 million on the Treasury, Al Sallakh said.

Among other economic experts who welcomed the renewal of the trade protocol with Iraq is Mr Khalidoun Abu Hassan. "The rise in allocations for this protocol from \$220 million to \$235 million will have a positive effect on the volume of Jordanian exports to Iraq and strengthen their economic ties," Abu Hassan pointed out.

But, Al Sallakh believes that such increase is insufficient, unless there is another agreement outside the protocol. The oil for food deal can offer numerous opportunities for Jordanian manufacturers to export their products to Iraq. This is backed by their products high standard quality and competitive price, however Al Sallakh stressed that the most beneficiary from the deal is Turkey.

This week will see intensified technical contacts and meetings between the governor of the Central Bank and his Iraqi counterpart to agree on mechanisms for carrying out the renewed trade cooperation protocol between the two countries for this year. ■

Israel has muted response to S. Africa arms proposal

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1980s, making South Africa the only country to build nuclear weapons and then voluntarily destroy them all.

The history of Israel's military cooperation with South Africa has given that country a much lower profile in the new order. While the Mandela government continues to maintain apparently good relations with Israel—several Israeli leaders attended Mandela's inauguration in May 1994—Arab and Muslim countries now have a greater entree to Pretoria.

Even in the face of US disapproval, South Africa maintains close relations with countries such as Libya, Syria and Iran, whose president, Hashemi Rafsanjani, was received with great pomp here in September. Indeed, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki said Sunday that

the new South Africa had scrapped the pro-Israel bias of apartheid times. Pretoria will sell arms to Syria if it wants to, Mbeki told a news conference after a policy planning session of the African National Congress.

The Cabinet plans to discuss the deal during its first regular meeting of the year Wednesday.

Now that apartheid has been over for nearly three years, the Mandela government has had some trouble with the armaments industry it inherited from the former regime. The state-owned arms manufacturer, Armscor, and its sales arm, Denel, have positioned themselves as potential cash cows to the new government, which desperately needs large infusions of cash to rebuild schools, infrastructure, create jobs and

build millions of homes for the homeless.

Officials insist their plan is to refuse arms to countries involved in conflict, but since those are the countries that invariably wish to buy, the plan has proved unrealistic. In the past three months, South Africa has flip-flopped on selling arms to Rwanda.

The United States opposes the proposed sale to Syria because Washington considers Damascus a sponsor of terrorists.

But South Africa sees arms sales largely as a commercial proposition, not a political one.

In this particular case of Syria, the South African approach has been purely commercial, but all the US sees is maintaining the current balance of power in the Middle East, Sass said. ■

Rumors of Romanov return thrill Russian monarchists

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instant irrelevance, she said. Nor would it help that in Russia's present lean economic condition, all three members of the Romanov family are quite pudgy, she said.

"If you're creating a myth—which in itself is a failed attempt to form a state—there should be something catchy about it," she said. "The fat boy isn't catchy."

Sergei Yastzhembsky, spokesman for Yeltsin, was hardly less scathing in slamming the Telegraph story, which he called "not serious."

"It would be funny if it wasn't annoying," he said. "One has the impression that the British mass media have run out of their own monarchy stories and they want to expand—including into Russian territory."

It was not possible to reach the Romanov family in Madrid for comment. Through a family friend in New York, however, Grand Duchess Leonida Georgievna said there have been conversations "for months" with the Russian government but no definite plans for the family's return. She would not be more

specific.

So will Russia be without a unifying national idea indefinitely? Some Russians fervently hope so.

"I have misgivings about any such idea," Pavel Gurevich, vice president of the Academy of Humanitarian Research, wrote in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, the official government newspaper. "Knowing what a sinister role ideology can play in people's lives, do we again want to assume this burden? Any idea will turn itself against us. In calling for a new idea, we are calling for demons!" ■

JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar



Princess Basma visits children

HRH Princess Basma meets children at the Martyr's Family Welfare Society School in Marka. The Princess' visit is organized by the Queen Alia Fund as part of its Ramadan charity campaign. Princess Basma has also visited so far Wadi Araba, Ajloun, Jerash and Mu'ta to inspect people's needs for this holy month. The Fund has already distributed 35 tons of goods, foodstuffs, blankets and clothes to needy families at a cost of JD 75,000. The Ramadan charity campaign has started on an annual basis since 1991 and provides help for the underprivileged through support projects and direct assistance in the form of health care and material support for students.

Union Power

Eight Trade Unions are angry with the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) for drawing up a new unitary system for all the 17 trade unions that exist in the country. The unions which include the Union of Land Transport (the biggest in the country), Banking Union, Electricity Workers Union, Spinning and Weaving, General Services, Petroleum Workers, Public Health and the Construction Workers Union, are refusing to accept the decision of the GFTU. The eight argue that it is not within the jurisdiction of the federation to impose a unitary system and goes against the internal bylaws of each union. They point out that it is the general assembly of each union that has the ultimate power in deciding the internal rules and regulations of each union. But the unions are not against the idea of a unitary system only if it is drawn up by a committee that is composed of representatives of each union. They argue that the GFTU has no right to interfere. However, it seems after endless negotiations, mutual agreement was reached and a unitary system was adopted by 14 trade unions of the GFTU. The Electricity Workers Union and the Union of Public Health maintained their stance and voted against, while the Banking Union boycotted the meeting.

Honorary Council set free on bail

The Honorary Council of Sri Lanka, Tawfig Abu Khajil has been released on bail by the Greater Criminal Court in Amman pending a sentence to be passed soon. His defence attorney has repeatedly called for the freeing of Abu Khajil who has been in jail for the last eight months. Abu Khajil has been accused for allegedly easing the way for selling Sri Lankan babies for European couples. He has been charged with other offences such as possessing fire arms. These latter turned out to be plastic ones. The bail has been set at JD 100,000.

Yet a new political party

A new political party is under the process of being established. Called the Jordanian Labor party, a grand name, the new entity will join the other 23 parties that already exist in the country. As the name suggests, it is expected to fight on labor issues, although a full manifesto has not yet been released. However, the party issued a statement last week praising the role of His Majesty King Hussein in helping to bring about the signing of the Hebron deal between the Israelis and the Palestinian National Authority.

Zionism in Cartoons

The Anti-Zionism and Racism Society in Jordan has just issued a new book in Arabic titled *Zionism in Word and Cartoons*. It is now registered with the National Library and the Ministry of Education has allowed it to be listed as one of the books to be distributed to pupils. The book is written by Nesri Al Tarazi while the sketches are drawn by Imad Hajaj, the famous cartoonist in *Al Rai* daily newspaper.

Post offices asked to be vigilant

The world is becoming increasingly concerned with the issue of letter-bombs following the two letter-bombs that were sent to the *Al Hayat* newspaper's offices in London and New York. Recently, the Minister of Telecommunication, Mr. Jamal Al Sarraih received a memorandum from the Secretary General of the International Postal Federation (IPF) urging him to take greater caution with regards to postal services in the country. The memo said that the recent letter-bomb was sent in 14 by 16.5 centimeter envelopes carrying no address of sender. The bomb was inserted in an invitation card for a musical concert, so that when the card is taken out of the envelope and opened it immediately explodes. The IPF called on all countries to be extra vigilant and look out for mail which is unusually heavy and to notify the police if they become suspicious.

Al Muasher says government respects opinion of opposition but...

In his weekly meeting with the press, Minister of Information Dr. Marwan Al Muasher said that the government is still discussing selling its shares in daily newspapers but that a final decision is expected this month. With regards to some deputies' attacks on the new year celebration that were broadcast by Jordan Television, Dr. Muasher said that the policy of the government is based on satisfying a plurality of views and there are different tastes in the Jordanian society. He added that the government wholeheartedly disagrees with the saying that JTV went out of its way. He pointed out that the government respects the opinion of the opposition but there are different opinions in the Jordanian society.

Zarqa holds Iftar campaign for needy

The Zarqa Municipality has started an Iftar campaign for the poor and needy during the holy month of Ramadan. The Mayor of Zarqa, Dr. Mustapha Al Fayad said that Iftar evenings are being held in mosques and charity societies in the city.



A cellular helps to tell the house my turn at the que because of the rush during Iftar



Accompanied by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, His Majesty King Hussein visited the Greater Amman Municipality, Saturday. They were met by the mayor of Amman, Mamdouh Al Abbadi. His Majesty thanked the mayor and the employees of the municipality for the great developments in the capital city of Jordan. He said Amman is now highly appreciated by every foreign visitor. He called on the people in the municipality to continue their good work so that Amman can continue to become a symbol of progress.

Ministry of Supply rejects offer Sugar can be imported 20% less than current price, says agent

By Star Staff Writer

A JORDANIAN businessman said he is able to save the treasury \$10 million annually by offering to import sugar at cheaper prices. Also he said that he is "ready to bring down the prices of bread, fodder, rice and corn to 20 percent less than the current prices."

Dr. Ali Jaradat, the agent for the "Euro-Orient Establishment" and a wealthy Jordanian who lives in Holland, said in a memo to the Speaker of the Lower House, Mr. Saad Hayel Al Snor, that he presented an offer to the Ministry of Supply, in April last year, which included a deal for a two-year contract to provide 350,000 tons for sugar. The deal is financed by the European Bank. The documented study, given to *The Star*, shows that the deal could provide sugar to the country at a JD 269 per ton, which is the lowest price that had been ever offered. For the past three years, the Ministry of Supply imported sugar at JD 310 per ton.

Mr. Jaradat said that "the Ministry cancelled this offer right after completing the study of the deal." He added that "Ministry studies agree that my offer could decrease the prices

of per kilogram [not subsidized] of sugar from about 360 fils to 270 fils if conditioned loan." According to Mr. Jaradat, experts in the Ministries of Finance and Planning and the Central Bank of Jordan, agree that the offer "is an opportunity which Jordan should not miss."

The whole quantity of 350,000 tons is fully financed by the Seller to the Buyer [the Ministry] at a variable interest rate to the Libor index, with principal and accumulated interest due in two years and two months (790 days) from the first shipment, with principle amount being \$116,550,000.

The Buyer also will deposit \$4 million in the Central Bank of Jordan for a single price of one shipment.

The document shows several letters and procedures that were exchanged between the Euro-Orient Establishment and presented to the Ministry of Supply. It also covered amendments on specifications that were required by the Ministry.

The documents explained that the sugar deal is "Refined Cane Sugar, Central/South American origin (Seller's choice), sound and fit for human consumption corresponding to the CODEX Worldwide standards as published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization for White Sugar. Specifications 'A' or better."

Such specifications were approved by the Department of Specifications in the Ministry of Supply, as documents state. And also the documents show the approval of the Ministry of the offered specifications, as it complies with the international standards.

The document says that the Euro-Orient Establishment upon the request of the Ministry of Supply asked its [foreign] sales manager to provide a financed sugar deal. Last September the manager visited the country, in a response to the invitation of the Ministry, to discuss the deal with the Tenders Committee in the Ministry.

"We discussed all the angles of the deal and initially the Ministry and the other concerned departments found our offer as a great opportunity," said Dr. Jaradat. "For no reason why, at the final drafting of the deal, the Minister refused to pass it."

A document says that despite the low prices of the offer, the Ministry of supply

imported sugar at prices reaching as high as \$431 per ton in 1996.

From his side, the Minister of Supply, Mr. Munir Sobar was not available for response. But Mr. Ahmad Theibani of the Ministry's public relations said that the Ministry can not accommodate such a quantity of 350,000, and he advised Dr. Jaradat to go to the market as it is open now for the private sector to import merchandise.

"I find no logical excuse for the government to defy such an encouraging deal," Lower House deputy Abdel Baqi Gammo told *The Star*. Gammo played as a mediator between the Minister of Supply and the agent, Jaradat. He added that "It is the least price offer of sugar we ever had. Easy conditions and encouraging facilities regarding finance."

If the government cannot take the whole quantity, the seller said he is ready to provide the country with the quantity that the country needs, Gammo explained.

Mr. Gammo said he is still following the issue with the Ministry, and might present it to the Lower House, if efforts failed to prove positive.

Mr. Jaradat said he is planning to make Jordan a center of sugar trade in the Middle East, and he is doing all the procedures needed in that regard.

Minister of Culture bans public meetings Qudah under hammer from intellectuals

AMMAN (Star)—The ceiling for public liberties and freedom of speech is like a yo-yo in this country. One day it's up, while on other days it's extremely down. No logical reasons are given, just pure directives are issued from the high and mighty.

And this was the case for culture, that elusive concept governments like to take a pot shot at every once in a while. This time, it is from none other than the Minister of Culture, Dr. Ahmed Al Qudah.

In his infinite wisdom, the good doctor has, from now on, banned any cultural meetings from taking place anywhere in the Kingdom without first obtaining permission from the Cultural Manager of each governorate. To prove his point, Dr. Al Qudah issued directive no. 1 for 1997.

All cultural clubs and forums, which number 275, that are registered in the country, have to abide by the new directive or else. But we are not told specifically what all else means. The closure of clubs seems very likely.

The directive, which was taken after Engineers President Leith Shehail gave a lecture in Karak earlier this month criticizing the government, sent writers up in arms. They feel very threatened.

They point out that this was not the final straw that broke the camel's back.

The Jordan Writer's Association (JWA) saw the minister's directive aimed at them because of their cultural week held at the end of last month. Literally translated as "debate of choices," the week examined the political, economic, cultural and creative issues relating to the past and future of Jordan. More than 33 leading personalities and politicians spoke at the debate.



Qawar

But why would the ministry object to such a gathering? After all it's healthy to hold such a debate since it reflects genuine concern for society. Academics and intellectuals have pointed out that the debate held reflects the maturity of Jordanian democracy.

But it seems that this was not the case. The raising of the ceiling of expression that we saw at the demonstration outside the recently held Israeli expo at Marj Al Hamam, has not unfortunately maintained its momentum.

Feeling angry with the minister's decision, Abdullah Radwan, a prominent poet and the cultural director of the government in the ministry, protested. He said that he was surprised by the minister's decision to retire him, since few days later, he was promised by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture to solve the issue once and for all. But this may have meant that the decision to fire Abdullah has already been taken.

The poet is sure that his dismissal was related to the fact that he also serves as the rapporteur of the administrative committee of the JWA and was one of the organizers of the "debate of choices."



Al Qudah

If applied to the limit, the directive could prove very restrictive and an exercise to curtail freedom of speech. It is argued that it would make the cultural manager in a very powerful position and censor material that he sees fit. The head of the JWA, Ibrahim Al Abbasi and Fakhri Qawar, the general secretary of the Union of Arab Writers feel very angry. Both say that such a decision could take us back to the dark ages. Qawar says that this certainly takes us back to the martial law era.

But that's not all, and we are not likely to see the end of this episode. Writers are promising to strike outside Parliament and are calling on deputies to bring down the minister. But if this does not happen, and the directive remains, an uncertain future for Jordanian culture will linger on.

The minister lashed at writer's who opposed the decision calling them as being involved in a scaramongering exercise. He said that he would stick to his guns since the decision is purely organizational and will not affect the contents if the events that would take place.

سيرة من الحياة

People & Politics

The politics of our economic relations with Iraq

The Jordan-Iraq economic agreement is signed and sealed. Good news to Jordanians who were worried that Iraq might be getting ready to settle scores with the Kabarti government. Minister of Information Marwan Muasher wants us to believe that recent developments in relations with Iraq are economic in nature and are not related to political relations. That's academic thinking. Jordanians are politically sophisticated and they know that inter-Arab relations are always based on politics—economics comes later, it is a by-product of political courtship.

But let's take Dr. Muasher's statements at their face value. And let's assume that economics not politics is at the heart of our relationship with Baghdad. How would one define the nature of our economic ties with Iraq? Is it on an equal footing: who needs the other most? And given our great dependency on the Iraqi market and oil, how can we ensure a healthy, growth-oriented economic relationship with Iraq?

And if we are not tying our political stance towards the Iraqi leadership to economic matters, how can we make sure that the Iraqis will do the same?

One has to reflect on the long-term nature of our relations with Iraq, a country on which Jordan is dependent for its entire oil needs, a country whose economy our industries rely to stay afloat, a country which is a neighbor and was at one stage an ally.

So far Dr. Muasher and the rest of government officials are tightening their lips on the outcome of talks held between senior officials from both sides. We cannot imagine that these talks centered exclusively on strengthening economic ties. Let's admit it. In recent years, Jordan has taken some landmark positions from the Iraqi leadership; harboring opposition members and renegade senior officials, publicly denouncing the Baghdad regime and reaching the stage where it was interfering in Iraqi internal matters. But that is changing slowly—now, Amman is no longer speaking harshly of the Iraqi leadership. It is actually doing business with it and the number of official meetings that have taken place between top Jordanian and Iraqi officials in recent weeks is double that of the meetings that took place in the last two years.

There are many Jordanians, economists and politicians alike, who see Iraq as more than our regular trading partner. Canada is a trading partner, but it is not Iraq. For Jordan, Iraq is a strategic economic asset. To safeguard that asset, we must maintain special political ties with Baghdad. If that is not happening now, then we would bet that it is only a matter of time before our government realizes that. At least when it comes to Iraq, one can hardly separate economics from politics.

Crisis in Sudan

It is difficult to know exactly what is happening in Sudan nowadays. There are reports of an Eritrean/Ethiopian incursion into Sudan's Blue Nile province in the east of the country. For Jordanians this is part of an American-Israeli conspiracy to divide this Arab country and topple its Islamist regime. The Egyptian reaction to Sudanese appeals for help has been muted and disappointing. Cairo says the trouble in the east of Sudan is an internal affair and no foreign invasion is taking place. No independent reports are coming in. The international press is not yet interested in the crisis.

But for Jordanians it is a classic case of a foreign conspiracy to bring down yet another Arab country. The case of Iraq, Libya and Algeria comes to mind. The question is what can Jordan do? Not much in terms of direct help. The usual words of condemnation by the Lower House and heads of popular and professional associations will not do much to fend off any alleged aggression against Sudan. On the other hand, Jordanians should not feel frustrated over their inability to help reverse any attack on their Sudanese brethren.

Like Iraq, Libya and more recently Yemen, the responsibility for protecting Arab lands and territories from the greed and conspiracies of enemies rests with all Arabs and not only Jordanians. But if the threat to Sudan from its neighbors proves correct, then what will really surprise us will be Egypt's reaction to the crisis. It stands to lose just as much as the Sudanese from any foreign incursion into the Nile provinces. The security of Sudan has always been an integral part of that of Egypt for centuries. If there is a change in that age-old strategy, then this is new to us—and to the majority of Egyptians and Sudanese.

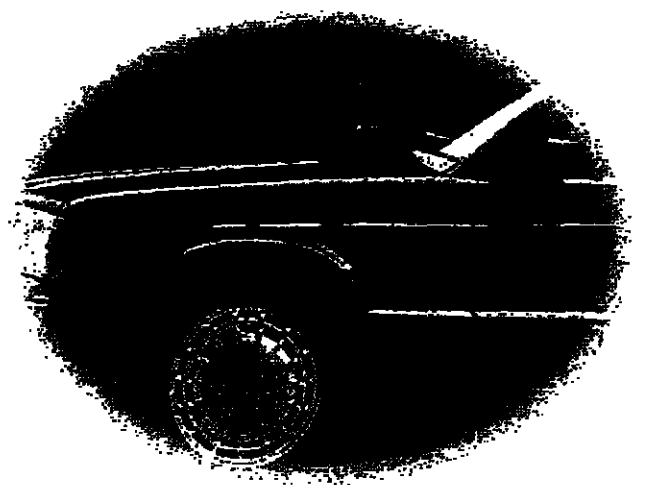


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LURIE'S WORLD

LURIE Jan 17 '97



Our Say...

Dealing with the water challenge

THE DRY spell is over. Thank God! Arctic air is finally pouring into the region and with it comes moisture and humidity. This weekend more rain is expected and snow should fall on mountainous areas. It is too early to say if the season has been saved by the arrival of rain, but one thing is for sure. No amount of rain will be enough to meet the growing need of the population and the infrastructure.

If the present trend continues and more rain and snow come our way, then the Kingdom's water reserves are likely to increase. But there are no guarantees that the endemic water shortage, which the country has been experiencing for over a decade now, will not be repeated this summer.

But between praying for rain and actually working to maintain and increase Jordan's water supply there exists some worrying statistics. Experts from Jordan and in neighboring countries are in agreement that natural water supplies, like aquifers, lakes, rivers and water basins are not meeting the growing demand for the most strategic source of life. Rain water is not enough or is not being used efficiently to replenish ancient aquifers and feed reservoirs. In fact, if the current situation continues unabated, most ancient non-renewable aquifers will dry out, or be replaced with salty water, in a matter of years—before the end of the first decade of the new millennium. These facts are not being disputed today by any responsible party. The water crisis is here already and all countries of the region without exception are feeling it.

Water is at the heart of the political and territorial disputes in the Middle East. But there couldn't be winners and losers in any settlement reached in the Palestinian territories, the Golan Heights and Lebanon. An unfair settlement that encroaches upon the rights of one party is a recipe for war and future conflicts. The water challenge is a regional one and is beyond politics and ideology. Regional efforts to deal with this challenge could provide a solid bedrock for regional cooperation. In fact, the only way the peoples of this region can respond to a challenge of this magnitude will be by working together on the long term.

Meanwhile, here in Jordan there is a growing urgency to address the problem of water shortage at the highest level. In addition to creating public awareness and investing in a major overhaul in the failing water network of main cities, the government should begin work on a masterplan to build more dams and enhance national water catchment network in order to increase our strategic water reserves and control consumption and waste. This will not happen by holding seminars and conferences, but by forming a higher committee with a clear mandate to propose a strategy for the coming 10 years to deal with the water challenge.

We cannot pin our hopes on the prospects of a good rain harvest and the consistency of rainfall. For the past few years Jordan and the East Mediterranean region have been experiencing unusually mild winters. So far we have little options to work with. We should be preparing now for a challenge of a catastrophic dimension. ■

Letters to the Editor

A Camelot of peace

To the Editor

I have read with interest the recent articles by Christian Dumit, including his sardonic response to my "Modest Proposal" in which I suggest deporting fanatical Jewish settlers from Hebron back home to Brooklyn. In Mr. Dumit's reply he suggests sending them to the Negev to "make the desert flower." He misses the point that trespass, theft, and murder would not be tolerated in New York or anywhere else and should not be tolerated in Hebron. But if these settlers go to the Negev and engage in regular forays of rape, murder and pillage, they will not be popular in the Negev either. I'm sure the

Bedouin of the Negev, who have lived there for thousands of years, not to mention the Ethiopian Jews who have been settled around the Dimona nuclear facility, would object.

However, Mr. Dumit's latest article is not sardonic but visionary. He has made a brilliant suggestion of a Camelot in South Lebanon for the establishment of a university for peace studies and ecological, archaeological, petrological and theological issues. I wholeheartedly support this proposal and would consider it a privilege to participate. May I suggest as an addition that societies engaged in remedial therapy for victims of torture set up offices in Camelot as part of

the Peace Studies which should also include psychoanalytic investigation into the pathology of torturers. Pioneer work in this direction has already been begun by the great psychiatrist Franz Fanon and others. This is only one of the fields of study which have benefited from the insights of post-colonial discourse, a discipline which would throw light on the other area-studies in Mr. Dumit's admirable plan as well.

Please let me know where I can sign on to receive information about this very hopeful project.

Sincerely yours

Dr. A. Clare Brandabur

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Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

Osama El-Sherif

Managing Editor

Dr. Marwan Al Asmar

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Exposing cover-ups shall get you fired or banned

By Parveez Syed

SPEAKING THE truth about human rights abuses in Palestine can get you fired in the United States, according to Robert McGee.

Three editors of *The Freeman*, a monthly magazine published by the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) in New York found that out when they published two items that infuriated American Zionists. In the November issue, Hans Hoppe, an economics professor at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, wrote a book review pointing out that Hitler was relatively benign before WWII compared to Stalin. Stalin killed 20 million people before the outbreak of the war, whereas Hitler didn't start killing many until after the war. The statement was true, yet it infuriated some influential American Zionists, who said the opinion amounted to Holocaust revisionism.

Zionist anger was compounded the following month when Robert McGee, president of the Dumont Institute wrote an article about the violation of Palestinian human rights by Zionists. McGee pointed out that Palestinians have been having their land stolen and have been subjected to human rights abuses since the 1940s, with the help of American taxpayers, who regularly give Israel more than \$5 billion of their tax dollars each year.

As a result of these articles, Israel Kirzner, a respected economics professor at New York University and a Jewish rabbi, resigned from the FEE Board of Trustees. McGee was infuriated. He was especially incensed at Kirzner's article, which he said amounted to no more than Palestinian propaganda. Hans Sennholz, president of FEE and a former Luftwaffe pilot for Hitler during World War Two, felt compelled to act, partly because of his former background. So he fired Larry White, the editor of the November issue. Robert Batemarcio, the book review editor, and Robert Higgs, the editor of the December issue.

The firings caused a scandal. Since its founding in 1946, FEE has been a supporter of free markets, limited government and free speech. So it became an especially newsworthy event when FEE punished three of its own (not to mention the two authors) just because they spoke the truth about a subject that has not received much coverage in the American press. Higgs stated that he decided to publish McGee's article because it said things that needed to be said, and that they were not being said by anyone else in America. The mentality in present-day America is such that anyone who speaks out against human rights abuses perpetrated by Jews is labeled anti-semitic. As a result, the vast majority of people who would otherwise speak out decide to keep silent.

Congressmen openly voice their support of Israel lest they face the wrath of the organized and well-funded Jewish lobby, which does not hesitate to threaten to support their opponent in the next election if they do not fall into line. The presidential and vice-presidential candidates for the two major US political parties all voiced strong support for Israel during the recent US election. Jack Kemp even compared Benjamin Netanyahu to Jack Kennedy! Whenever the American press reports on events in Israel, they take a Zionist position. They never fail to call it a tragedy when one or two Israeli soldiers are killed in some terrorist attack, but when 10 or 20 or more Palestinians are wounded or killed for defending themselves and their land, the news item is reported without comment.

This demonisation process is being used against Iraq, but in recent years it has also been used against Iran, Libya, and the Palestinians. The state of public opinion in the US will not change until the American tax-payers and voters become aware of the truth of the situation in occupied Palestine. That will happen only when the Arabs who live in the US form a lobby that is equally vocal and effective as the Zionist lobby that now has a stranglehold over the press and US Congress. How can anyone discuss Iraq objectively when speaking to a group of morons wearing "I'd walk a mile to smoke a camel (picture of Arab on camel in sunlight)" T-shirts? Such individuals, many of whom probably could not locate Iraq on a map and were not even aware of that nation's existence prior to 1991, have allowed themselves to be whipped into a frenzy of hatred by mass media propaganda, which comes these days mainly from the appropriately named "boob tube". Like the word "witch" in the 16th century, the smear words "Muslim or Islam" has the power to instill fear of ostracism or punishment, so cowards of many political stripes do all sorts of mental and verbal gymnastics to avoid the feared appellation.

According to McGee, US politicians are quick to condemn Arab terrorism like the 1983 attack that killed 241 US servicemen in Beirut, Lebanon, the Oklahoma City bombing (which turned out not to be from Arab terrorists), the World Trade Center bombing and the Saudi Arabian

bombing that killed or injured hundreds of people. The press is eager to devote substantial coverage to such events. But the big question—the one that neither politicians nor the press addresses—is "why do some Arabs engage in such activities?"

"The Zionists use the Holocaust and Nazi crimes to justify their systematic racist and brutal crimes against the Palestinians. They milk the suffering of the Jews at the hands of Hitler not only to perpetuate further blind racism and violence by Zionists, but to carefully cultivate and deepen the guilt of Western non-Jews for the crimes of fascism and Nazism. To a large extent this has succeeded in guaranteeing blind public support for Israel (of course this is not to ignore Western strategic interest).

all the time. Israeli rubber bullets have caused some Palestinian youths to become brain dead. Between the start of the intifada in 1987 and mid-1995, more than 1,400 Palestinians have been killed, including 260 children. The American press devotes little or no space to these Palestinian murders, yet never fails to cover a story involving the death of one or two Israeli soldiers.

Israel has indeed maintained torture, as a method to obtain confessions from Palestinians and others, under the protection of the law, through decisions of the Israeli Supreme Court. The number of those who have suffered painful physical and psychological punishments while under Zionist captivity is in the thousands. A few dozens deaths during the exercise of torture have been reported. These Israeli ac-



Anyone who pays any attention to the news knows that the US has been the strongest supporter of Israel since its founding in the 1940s, and that various Arab states have, at one time or another, been enemies of Israel. But what is less well reported by the US media is the Israeli terrorism.

The Palestinian "problem" stems from the creation of Israel on Palestinian land. During the 1948 war, Israeli forces not only drove the Palestinians from their homes, but also made a point of dismantling more than 400 Palestinian villages, towns and cities stone by stone, so that the Palestinians would have nothing to return to. As a result, three million of the estimated six million Palestinian population are now refugees, a million of whom are forced to this day to live in appalling conditions in refugee camps. The Palestinians' property rights—one of the most basic of all human rights—was systematically disregarded. This disregard continues to this day, as evidenced by the West Bank settlement policies of the Israeli government. Russian Jews and others are being given Palestinian land to live on, and the Palestinian owners are being driven from their land without compensation. Whole Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem have been confiscated and turned over to Jewish "settlers" in an effort to consolidate the Jewish hold on the city, which Israel is making into the capital of the Jewish state.

The land grab is only one of many human rights abuses. Palestinians are subject to searches at numerous check points in their own country. Their homes can be blown up without due process if a family member is merely accused of terrorist activity. There have been systematic attempts to prevent Palestinians from getting an education, as evidenced by the closing of Palestinian schools. Beatings, torture, imprisonment and even killings of Palestinians have become commonplace. Palestinian farmers have systematically been deprived of water for their farms, while Israeli farmers get what they need. Palestinian freedom of travel has been restricted or denied on numerous occasions, making it difficult or impossible to visit family or go to work, thus causing economic hardship. Christian and Muslim Palestinians who live in the West Bank and Gaza have been prevented from worshipping at Jerusalem's religious sites.

Palestinian merchants who sell watermelons in the local market have been beaten because they sliced open the watermelons, thus revealing the colours of the Palestinian flag. Palestinians have also been beaten for wearing shirts that are the colours of the Palestinian flag. During the recent election, right-wing Israeli party posters placed in front of polling places falsely warned Palestinians that their health and pension benefits would be taken away if they voted, thus greatly reducing the number of Palestinians who dared to vote. Some of those who tried to vote were beaten by police. One young Palestinian was beaten by about 40 Israeli police in front of James Moran, a member of the US Congress. Bystanders said this sort of thing happens

of course, completely fly in the face of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and all kinds of UN resolutions.

The General Assembly of the UN has recognised "...the fundamental right (of Palestinians) to struggle ... by any means at their disposal."

In the General Assembly, where no nation has veto power and resolutions are usually adopted by a simple majority, the number of resolutions passed against Israel have been even greater.

The assembly repeatedly condemned Israel's occupation of Arab land, its attacks on Lebanon, its violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention, its claim to Jerusalem as its unified capital, its relations with South Africa, and its nuclear program.

US press coverage is biased and pro-Israeli. The US has been the strongest supporter of Israel right. Sirhan Sirhan, the Arab who assassinated Robert Kennedy, said he did it because Senator Kennedy approved the sale of military aircraft to Israel, which would be used to kill Palestinians. While the Holocaust was a tragedy, and while practically everyone agrees that systematic extermination of an ethnic or religious group cannot be condoned, it does not follow that the survivors of that group have some inherent right to found a country on someone else's land. US taxpayers have been forced to support this land grab, and the many human rights abuses that have gone with it, since the 1940s. For 1996, American taxpayers had to pay more than \$5.5 billion for various kinds of aid to Israel—that is \$1,375 for every Jewish man, woman and child (Palestinians don't get the benefit of the "aid"). Yet Israel cannot be called a poor country. It has a per capita gross domestic product approaching that of England.

The whole issue of foreign aid needs to be addressed. The US constitution provides for a government of limited powers. The government can constitutionally do only those things that are specifically enumerated in the constitution. Those who favour foreign aid programs might argue that giving foreign aid is in the best interest of the US. But even if that were sometimes the case, it does not follow that such foreign aid programs can become constitutional just because they might be in America's best interest. Besides, the "best interests" argument does not seem to apply to Israel, a country that has received nearly \$78 billion in foreign aid from the US between 1948 and 1996. At least part of the military aid Israel receives is used to abuse the human rights of Palestinians.

American taxpayers are being abused by being forced to support Israeli terrorism and socialism. At the very least, the foreign aid spigot should be turned off, the sooner the better. In addition, those politicians who have the courage should speak out against the human rights abuses that have been perpetrated against the Palestinian people. ■

This is an edited version about bias in the American media. The author works for the Global Media Monitoring Unit in the UK.

Middle East Beat

Erbakan's Turkey

MR ERBAKAN'S ascent to power, was not an easy affair for a country like Turkey which always extolled the secular values of the founder of the Republic Mustafa Kemal. Nevertheless, with popular support and real political, financial, industrial and its industrial complex, and the traditional centers of power. However, and as it is often said, ascendancy to power can be easier than keeping it.

For Mr Erbakan, the classical sources of threat to his premiership, as assumed by observers of Turkish politics, such as the military, financial institutions, secularists, and supporters of European association, did not materialize. Rather, some peculiar circumstances which are the by-products of a large country and diverse society, have started threatening his political position. Sufism, and Islamic religious orders which have been in exile since the days prior to the Ottoman Empire, have started to play a political role during the era of the late president Mr Turgut Ozal.

In their multitude of forms and purposes, inevitably some extreme forms of such orders have emerged recently, with peculiar demands and even ways of attire, which are anathema to Turkey's drive towards modernism. Such a group, which has created much waves, called *acemendi* meaning helplessness in front of God, seems to have been involved in various scandals and practices, under the guise of puritanism and return to the ways of early Islam.

Mr Erbakan's invitation to the various mainstream Sufi orders has created plenty of suspicion, especially after the had press reports that attacked the chadartans of faith. The Prime Minister has to address the balance now, and work through his partners in government to define the borders of his policies, and reassure the Turkish public at large.

The second scandal, which has been inherited by his first term in office, is the linkage of right-wing extremism with the various Turkish state organs. It is an issue which may not be investigated properly, and the results may not be achieved, but there are still high expectations that adequate explanations will be emerging in regard to this particular issue, and perhaps, heads may have to roll in the various state organs if Mr Erbakan is to maintain his credibility in his drive against corruption.

Will he be able to act on the investigation results, once available? Will he have to sweep the whole issue under the carpet, in the usual act of a politician? The choices are obviously hard, and they will strain the image of Mr Erbakan who is attempting to present himself as a man who will make an indelible impression on the face of Turkish politics, and push it to a new frontier.

This path is fraught with danger. The extent of involvement of perhaps, some politicians, military personnel, and security officials is still unknown, and the extent of their power and reach cannot be assessed yet. Mr Erbakan may have to adjust his position, and decide what can be done, worthwhile, if the country is not to suffer another upheaval.

As if the internal idiosyncrasies are not enough, Mr Erbakan may be drawn into a regional conflict now with the recent purchase of the Greek Cypriots of Russian anti-aircraft missiles and place them on their side of the island. Unfortunately for the Turkish Premier, all those issues have been inherited from previous administrations, and are pre-conditions of certain international realities.

The intractable problem of Cyprus will come at one point to haunt Erbakan, and it will show the extent to which he is involved in the formulation of Turkey's foreign policy. His drive towards openness with the Islamic world has been a new dimension, but judging from the issue of the Kurds, Cyprus is likely to remain a constant within this policy.

Business scene

■ Al-Hayat Pharmaceutical Co., offered its first products on the market. The company, established in 1993 at a capital of JD 2 million, constructed a development plant on an 8,000 square metres in Amman. It depends on national expertise besides European and American consultations. The company provides about 150 jobs.

■ The International Ceramic Industries Co., established in 1993 at a capital of JD 4 million, recorded a 10.6% growth in its budget to reach JD 8.1 million in the first half of last year. Its fixed assets were about JD 5.5 million until last June.

■ The mid-annual sales of the Chemical Industries Co., generated net profits at JD 207,000. Its budget until mid-1996 was about JD 4.5 million. The company's investments in the Chlorine Co., are at JD 475,000, and carry out various industrial projects related to chemicals.

■ The output of the Arab White Cement Co., this 196,603 tons of ready cement last year. This is a rise of 5000 tons compared to 1995. The company produces 100,000 tons annually, but this was increased last October by 25% to reach 125,000 tons. The rate of the domestic white cement consumption is estimated at 55,000 tons per year and the remainder goes to Syria and Saudi Arabia. The company is seeking new markets like the Palestinian areas and Yemen.

■ Jordan Cement Factories (JCF) will start exporting its products directly to the Palestinian market next week, after concluding a door-to-door agreement between Amman and Israel. The annual needs of the Palestinian market are estimated at 2.1 million tons of cement. Last year JCF exported to Palestine 89,000 tons, but this volume will be increased this year to 400,000 tons, according to Dr Bassam Al Saket, the company's chairman.

■ Central Bank of Jordan assets till last December were JD 3,414,358,000, among them JD 140,180,155 gold reserve. CBJ assets in convertible foreign currency last month reached JD 2,143 billion. The Bank's assets from Jordanian currency were JD 1,128,822,000 during December 1996.

Foreign Exchange Wednesday, 22 January

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7880	0.7100
£	1.1983	1.2643
DM	0.4540	0.4963
FF	0.5229	0.5283
Y	0.1344	0.1261
S	0.6134	0.6168
₪	0.4048	0.4064
₹	0.0462	0.0462

Transport and the Aqaba railway
Hot on the heels of privatization

AMMAN (Star)—Privatization of public corporations is a government policy. The latest to follow such a path is the Public Transport Corp., (PTC) and the Aqaba railway.

The Ministry of Transport has invited 13 international consulting firms that are approved by the World Bank to present offers regarding the privatization of these corporations.

After conducting a thorough research of these offers by a joint committee from the World Bank, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Planning, five of the 13 companies were chosen, according to Mr Naser Al Lawzi Minister of Transport.

The five companies have presented their technical and financial offers and the winner of the tender will carry out a financial evaluation of the Aqaba Rail assets, its services in carrying phosphate, the revenues from these services and the quantity of phosphate being transported.

Then the company will provide the ministry with tender documents concerning the operational management and the modernization of the railway. These are to be offered by local and foreign private firms including the Jordan Phosphate Mines Co.



Al Lawzi



Mr Al Lawzi said that the offers were approved by the Joint Consulting Concerns after approving certain conditions, mainly the condition to accept Jordan Phosphate as a major shareholder in any deal concerning the modernization, management, maintenance and development of the Aqaba railway. This also involves training and qualifying the present employees and laborers of the railway.

The cost of a part of this project is estimated at JD 400,000, financed equally by the government and the Arab Bank (JD 200,000 each), Al Lawzi added.

Concerning the privatization of public transport, the ministry started to restructure the lines and transport networks in the Amman area to meet the geographic divisions of the area taking into consideration population density and securing transport services for the

majority of inhabitants.

Through corporation with the World Bank, the ministry has formed specialized technical committee to set documents, operation conditions and draft contracts based on dividing Amman into divisions before offering tenders for investing companies that are interested.

These arrangements determine the trips, timing, direction and number to use modernized buses. It is said that 400 of these are needed during the next four years.

PTC provides services for half of the operating lines in the Amman area, while other private companies operate the remainder according to investment contracts concluded five years ago.

After giving the tender of PTC lines to qualified companies, the corporation will have the organizational role, as a "corporation to organize public transport."

This corporation will collect fees and revenues from the

current and expected contracts related to hiring the lines network in Amman area.

On the regional level, Mr Al Lawzi said earlier this week that the transport agreement which was concluded between Jordanians and Israelis has become effective since the beginning of this month, according to "door-to-door" basis instead of the back-to-back, an earlier accord. Also, Jordan Cement will start exporting its products to the Palestine market on a door-to-door basis soon.

In addition, the land transit fleet between Jordan and Iraq will be raised as soon as the transport line between the two countries is opened.

The number of trucks that belong to the Jordan Land Transit Co., was 950 trucks in 1985, however, at present, it is only 350 trucks. However, Mr Al Lawzi pointed out that 100 trucks will be purchased to increase the efficiency of the Jordan land transport fleet.

Al Ahli and Business banks finalize merger

THE EXTRAORDINARY meeting of the shareholders in the Al Ahli and Business Banks will convene this Saturday to announce the creation of the new Jordan Ahli Bank at a capital of JD 42 million.

This meeting is held to discuss further steps towards the merger between the two banks. The executive committee is headed by Mr Abdul Kader Tash and includes Dr Rajal Al Mousher, Dr Abdul Rahman Tawny and Mr Wasif Azzar.

The shareholders' rights, estimated at JD 27.5 million, will be distributed during the

meeting, while JD 16.3 million will be allocated for compulsory reserve and JD 9.5 million for the capital and outside branches reserves.

The assets of the new bank are approximately JD 630 million, among the JD 168.1 million for the Business Bank and JD 461.9 million for Al Ahli Bank.

Al Ahli Bank shareholders' stake in the capital of the new bank is JD 36 million, and the Business Bank shareholder stake in the capital is JD 6 million.

ESCWA concludes training courses on NGO's management

AMMAN (Star)—Administrative organization is the name of the game. Two ESCWA workshops were organized over a five-day period under the title "UN-ESCWA managing NGO's: strategies for change."

The workshops, which started 12 January, aim at widening the knowledge of participants concerning organizational and administrative reform that faces NGO's when preparing their strategies to cement their organizational abilities.

Such knowledge will enable

these organizations to continue to perform and prove their feasibility on the local arena.

Opening the workshops, Dr Hazem Al Biblawi, the executive secretary of ESCWA said that "the natural emergence of the NGO's have paved the way for greater and more influential development all over the world."

He continued to say that recognizing the role of these civil organizations is but the first step, as great changes in 1990's make the confrontation of these changes a major challenge for any organization

which has a message to deliver.

As long as the NGO's have better management and organization, they will be more able to face such challenges, Al Biblawi said.

The training workshop was supervised by Dr John Hailey, the director of the International Development Center, in the Cranfield School of Management, that is affiliated to Cranfield University, UK.

Dr Hailey, who is also a senior strategic advisor and founding associate of the International NGO Training and

Research Center, Oxford, UK, which is a subsidiary to NGO's pointed out that the NGO's had seen a noticeable growth, we have millions of them, this increase can be mainly due to the growth in funds and aid. In addition there is a growing perception that these organizations respond to the needs of the people.

He added that the confidence in offering development policies that are imposed by superior levels or governments during 1960's and 1970's have become very weak.

The increase in the number of NGO's is accompanied by a series of changes concerning the nature and role of these organizations such as the growth in financial resources, the rise in number of employees and large scale development projects.

The 17 participants in the workshop who represent ESCWA departments will meet in another course next May.

Panamsat licensed in Pakistan for satellite transmission

The US-based PanAmSat Corp. (NASDAQ:SPOT) was awarded a license for private satellite services operations from the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority.

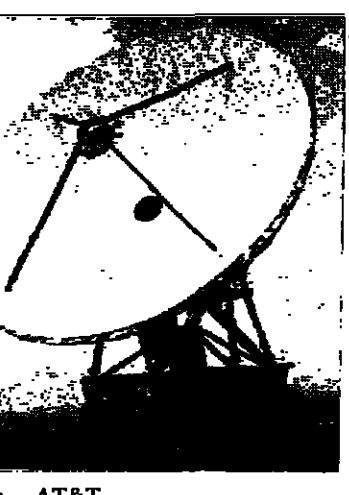
This will enable PanAmSat to provide satellite capacity for domestic data services within the country. Already, the company has attracted three customers who will use the PAS-4 Indian Ocean Region satellite as their transmission platform for domestic data communications services. The three customers—Acsys Ltd., Comstar-ISA and Fasco Systems—are licensed providers of value-added domestic telecommunications services in Pakistan.

"Pakistan has embraced satellite competition as an effective way to foster state-of-the-art communications services and spur further economic growth throughout the country," said Frederick A Landman, PanAmSat's president and chief executive officer.

"PanAmSat is poised to meet this commercial opportunity by serving three value-added customers on the PAS-4 satellite and further expanding available satellite capacity for Pakistan with the launch of the PAS-7 satellite later this year."

Acsys, Comstar and Fasco will use transmissions capacity on the PAS-4 C-band South Asia/Middle East beam to provide value-added data services, such as private business networks, within Pakistan. Fasco works with more than 200 customers and is one of the largest Internet service providers in Pakistan.

Comstar is an American/Pakistan joint venture data communications company and was the first to set up a star configuration-based shared TDMA hub in the region. Acsys offers specialized applications for the financial sector, government agencies, airlines, hotels, postal organizations, oil and gas companies, and is also working in collaboration with



AT&T.

Launched in August 1995, PAS-4 contains 16 C-band and 24 Ku-band transponders. The PAS-4 C-band South Asia/Middle East beam provides high-power transmissions coverage from London to Japan. The PAS-7 satellite, to be launched late in 1997, will contain 14 C-band and 30 Ku-band transponders and will be collected with PAS-4 over the Indian Ocean region at 68.5 degrees East Longitude.

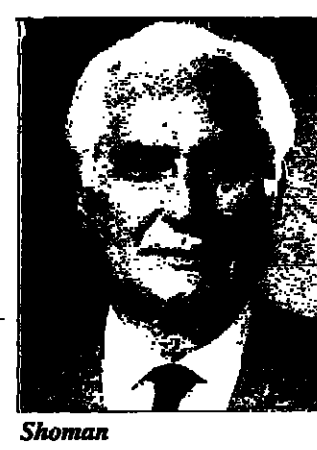
Arab Bank profits hit JD 95.7 million

THE ARAB Bank has made record profits of JD 95.7 million (\$135.2 million), a rise of 18 percent.

The Chairman of the Arab Bank, Mr Abdel Majeed Shoman described this achievement to be "the best result since we have established the Bank. This is attributed to the top performance of our branches in Europe, US, the Far East and the Gulf countries."

The Bank's total budget rose 4.3 percent by last December 1996 to reach JD 13.481 billion compared with JD 12.927 billion by the end of 1995.

These figures do not include other bud-



Shoman

gets in the Arab Bank Group that were estimated at more than \$22.9 billion in 1995.

Clients' deposits in the Arab Bank reached JD 6.396 billion by 1996 against JD 5.797 billion in 1995. Loans rose by 12 percent to JD 4.163 billion in 1996 compared with JD 3.711 billion in 1995.

The general budget of the Bank showed an increase in shareholders rights from JD 552 million in 1995 to JD 630 million in 1996. Long-term investments rose by 58 percent, to reach JD 727.6 million compared with JD 450 million in 1995.

ARAMEX, first Arab-based company to go public in US

NEW YORK Aramex International Limited (NASDAQ/NMS Symbol: ARAXF) one of the leading Middle East express courier and freight forwarding companies, has become the first Arab-based company to go public in the United States, when its one million shares offering started trading on the NASDAQ National Market System stock exchange on 14 January.

The offering has raised gross proceeds of \$7,000,000 for the Amman-based organization. Prior to the public offering the company also raised \$2 million from investment by US based Airborne Express—one of the largest express carriers in the world—representing a 6.8 percent stake in Aramex.

The initial public offering was subscribed by both Middle Eastern investors and US institutional investors. "We are delighted with our IPO (Initial Public Offering) and feel confident about our future and the opportunities that are out there for us," Aramex's Chairman, William Kingdon, commented.

"The US securities market is the largest and most active in the world and Aramex's trading on NASDAQ gives the company the visibility and credibility to expand and achieve its goals and objectives

leading towards the next century," added Fadi Ghandour, President and CEO.

Capital raised from the IPO will be funneled towards Aramex's future expansion plans in various areas essential to position Aramex at the forefront of the market. In an unprecedented step in the Middle East, Aramex plans to invest in its catalogue company, "Shop the World Direct" which represents major British and American mail order companies in Middle East markets. The company operates six mail order centers in Bahrain, Kuwait, Amman, Beirut, Doha and Cairo which will soon be expanded in Saudi Arabia, UAE and Cyprus markets.

The company plans to expand geographically into the Indian Sub-Continent, through joint ventures with existing licensed partners there. In addition to this, North Africa and the Central Asian Republics

and distribution centers which are located at the free trade zones at the airports of Dubai and Amman.

The express transportation business is an information technology intensive business and Aramex plans to invest heavily in developing its technological capabilities.

"The biggest investment that we are going through right now is in technology. The new capital injection will boost that and the company will be well positioned in terms of technological solutions operationally, financially, sales and marketing and client interface," Ghandour enthused.



The One Stop Shop for all your transportation needs.

The Star
Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly
Online
http://www.arabia.com/star

MARKET WATCH 18-21 January

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
↑ Poetry & Slaughter Houses 4.48 ↑ Industrial Commercial 3.88 ↑ Real Estate Investment 3.45	↑ Poetry Slaughter Houses 5.71 ↑ Jordan Bank 5.13 ↑ United Engineering 4.65	↑ Arab Financial Investments 4.44 ↑ JIMCO 3.33 ↑ Arab Paper Converting & Trading 3.39	↑ National Slaughter Houses 2.63 ↑ Jordan Sulphochemicals 2.50 ↑ Central Trading and Storage 2.04
↓ JIMCO 6.06 ↓ Arab Investment Bank 4.35 ↓ International Trade 4.00	↓ Universal Industries 5.12 ↓ Alnas Addin 5.00 ↓ JIMCO 3.23	↓ Arab Banking Corporation 5.05 ↓ Livestock and Poultry 1.59 ↓ Arab Medical Appliances 1.36	↓ Arab Banking Corporation 4.91 ↓ International Trade 4.00 ↓ United Engineering 2.17
General Price Index 153,369	153,220	153,400	153,600
Trade Volume 208844	1471813	898735	370624
Stock Volume 614075	902882	829832	408164
Highest Trading Stocks ↑ Tourism and Hotels 247580	↑ Alnas Addin 637243	↑ Middle East Bank 89190	↑ Industries Union 48245

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949

Palestine Post



Thousands of Hebronites come out to greet Arafat

Playing with words, our media strategy

The Arab world has long been in crisis. The creation of Israel must, in the final analysis, take the blame for this. But the crisis and the counter crisis have developed their phraseology as exemplified by a cultural and media invasion. This was accompanied by a set of stereotypes that were imposed from outside and related mainly to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that has dragged on from 1948, when Israel occupied Palestinian land.

When Israel occupied the rest of Palestine in the 1967 War, an attempt at Judaization began to creep in. The West Bank, started to be called "Judea and Samaria"; similarly Palestinian cities and streets were given Hebrew names, suggests Dr Bassam Al Saket.

Most of the time, international news agencies also started taking the cue from the Israelis, adopting names and phraseology that was seen as openly biased. And in the name of journalistic objectivity, the Arab media followed suit.

This is quite disturbing. Today, our media especially Television, Radio and the press are unconsciously playing to the tune.

Arab TV and radio stations do not hesitate to repeat Hebrew names, such as Kiryat Arba in Hebron, the Mualim Adomim settlement between Jerusalem and Jericho, the Eretz crossing near Gaza and others. These are spoken as if the situation is natural. Palestine, or one part of it, is called the Occupied Territories.

Our area also was given different names starting from the "Arab World," "the Near East," "the Middle East," "West Asia countries," etc. Phrases like belonging to the Third World, underdeveloped countries, and developing nations are used casually.

These names are approved and circulated in global news agencies, atlases, libraries. Western data banks, the international information networks in the West and also in our countries.

In addition, our students and scholars are riding on the same bandwagon and are unconsciously adopting similar terms or the same strain of thought.

According to a saying "a victim or the weakest become entrapped by the strongest opponent or the victimizer." The victim is so fascinated and overwhelmed by his foe that he blindly follows him, imitates his behavior and then becomes his slave.

Arab mass media systems are the victims of Western and Israeli cultural invasion. This has reached such critical proportions that urgent measures are required to face this kind of domination.

What has been lately concluded between Palestinians and Israelis in Hebron is called the "redeployment of Israeli troops" to indicate that Israelis are leaving Palestinian cities. However, the proper meaning of redeployment is that the army is moving from one place to another inside one entity, and not "withdrawing" from an occupied land that belongs to another people.

Moreover, Israeli news agencies call confiscated Arab lands as "settlements" to give people in the West an admirable expression about Israelis building their homes, factories and farms on Palestinian land. Our media repeats such an awful word.

But we really must call a spade, a spade. These settlements are no more than "colonies," and that is what they should be called. This is to point out what they are really created for.

Similarly, such term as East Jerusalem is repeated as if being a common parlance. What we fail to realize is that using such a term would make us, even if subconsciously, accept the redrawing of the city, which most Israelis certainly do not.

Arafat offers message of peace to Hebron settlers

By Rebecca Trounson
Los Angeles Times

HEBRON, West Bank—Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat arrived here last Sunday to a tumultuous greeting from thousands of jubilant Palestinians and offered a message of peace to the Jewish settlers who remain in their midst.

Arafat, who came to Hebron two days after Israeli troops turned most of the West Bank city over to Palestinian rule, sought to assure the settlers that Palestinians seek "a just peace" with them, not confrontation.

But most of the Palestinian leader's message was aimed at the sea of cheering, flag-waving people gathered below him as he spoke from the balcony of a hilltop stone fortress bedecked with celebratory banners. Until last Friday, the building, now a Palestinian police station, was the main headquarters of the Israeli military in Hebron and a hated symbol of its 30-year occupation.

"I declare that the city of Hebron is a liberated city," Arafat told the crowd. "Now, with the Hebron agreement, we are signing an agreement of peace with all the Israeli people. This is something new."

The agreement reached last Wednesday between Arafat and

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was later ratified by an overwhelming majority of the Israeli parliament, supported by members of Netanyahu's rightist coalition as well as the left-wing parties associated with the peace process.

Commentators have said the pact represented an agreement between the Palestinians and "the other half of Israel"—those who voted for Netanyahu and his right-leaning government.

Under terms of the long-delayed deal, about four-fifths of Hebron was turned over Friday to Palestinian control. The rest, an area where about 450 settlers and 20,000 Palestinians live uneasily together, remain under the purview of the Israeli army.

As the crowd, estimated at 20,000 to 50,000 people, waited for Arafat on last Sunday, a young man climbed to the top of a tall wooden pole and waved an oversized Palestinian flag. Groups of women



A double victory sign by Arafat as he addresses a crowd of 50,000 people in Hebron, Sunday

in traditional embroidered dresses began to chant: "This is the right of the Palestinians. This is our land, our homeland."

When a white-and-green helicopter appeared in the distance, a cheer went up as the craft circled and then settled down, precariously close to a few of the spectators. Arafat climbed out, waving and blowing kisses as his motorcade slowly made its way through the crowd to the headquarters.

Surrounded by watchful security officers as he made his address, Arafat vowed to continue working toward the Palestinians' next goals, taking control of remaining areas of the occupied West Bank and establishing an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"A vow is a vow," Arafat said, saying he made his commitment in the name of Khalil Wazir, the assassinated PLO official known as Abu Jihad.

"Yes, we will continue until we establish our Palestinian state."

But he sounded notes of conciliation to Hebron's Jewish settlers, who have bitterly opposed the agreement, arguing that it endangers their lives and cedes a portion of the Jewish homeland to the Palestinian Authority.

"I say to the settlers in Hebron that we don't want confrontation," Arafat said.

But settlement leaders reiterated their opposition to the Hebron agreement, and to Arafat himself.

"It is a sad day when a man like Arafat, an international murderer, enters Hebron, the city of our fathers," said Tzuriel Popovitch, spokesman for the council of Kiryat Arba, a Jewish settlement that neighbors Hebron.

In the wake of the Hebron agreement, Netanyahu is conducting an aggressive public relations campaign to shore up American support of the Jewish state, appearing on interview programs on three US networks last Sunday.

Netanyahu, on ABC's "This Week," called previous agreements negotiated by his Labor Party predecessors flawed, saying, "We have to plug a lot of holes" that have left Israelis and their interests insufficiently protected.

Netanyahu said that in fur-

ther negotiations with Arafat, Israel will determine the positions to which its troops will withdraw and will hold Arafat accountable for the Palestinians' strict adherence to the terms of agreements.

The Israeli leader also reiterated his party's long-held position that no part of Jerusalem can be ceded in negotiations and that the Palestinian entity that results from negotiations must not have sovereign rights, including the right to raise armies. But for many Palestinian residents of Hebron and surrounding villages, it was not a day for rhetoric but for celebration. Arafat's arrival was an occasion to leave their homes and offices, take their children and parents and head to the military compound at the city's highest point.

Mohammed abu Rajab, 32, a civil engineer, said he and other Hebronites were very excited to see Arafat in person. "We are very proud of him and expecting more of him. We are looking to him (to lead us) in Jerusalem. Hebron is not the end of the story."

"We have been waiting a lifetime for this day," added Sadika Ahmed Mustafa Fataha, a 50-year-old woman. "And God willing, all our land will become ours."

In mideast, focus now turns to aborted Israel-Syria talks

By Rebecca Trounson
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—With Israel's pullback from the West Bank city of Hebron at long last complete, US peace efforts in the Middle East are likely to turn toward Damascus and an attempt to persuade Israel and Syria to resume their aborted peace talks.

But while a peace treaty between Israel and Syria would have a profound effect on the stability of the region—and the chances for a comprehensive Middle East peace—the real-world words emanating from the two capitals last week gave little reason for hope.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quoted last Saturday in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* as saying he would never consider giving up the Golan Heights, the strategic plateau that is at the heart of any discussion between the two sides. Israel captured the Golan from Syria in the 1967 Middle East War.

"We must keep the Golan for strategic, historical and eco-

omic reasons," Netanyahu said in the interview.

Syria made similarly stubborn statements. On Friday, the day that Israel carried out its long-overdue partial withdrawal from Hebron, ceding most of the city to Palestinian rule, the official Syrian newspaper said there was nothing new to coax Syria back to the bargaining table.

Israel and Syria have held sporadic peace talks since 1991, but the negotiations broke off last spring and have yet to resume.

"In light of the current practices of the Netanyahu government, which is rejecting the principle of withdrawal from the Golan, there is nothing that Syria would negotiate for and ... nothing that encourages (it) ... to return to the negotiating table," the official *Al Thawra* newspaper said.

"Land remains an element that could never be an issue for flexibility," the newspaper said.

With each side reiterating its hard-line positions, progress on the Israeli-Syrian peace track "is still a nonstarter," said

Moshe Maoz, a professor of Middle East studies at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

Adding to the difficulties is Netanyahu's refusal to honor informal agreements that his Labor Party predecessors reached with Damascus. The informal accords called for Israel to withdraw from all or most of the Golan in exchange for Syria's agreement to detailed security measures.

Netanyahu, who defeated Shimon Peres in national elections in May, has said he feels no obligation to honor unsigned agreements, and he has given no sign of willingness to compromise on the Golan.

US officials have said Syria has demanded that negotiations be resumed at the point where they broke off, or at least that it receive some assurances that the years of talks have not been negated with Netanyahu's election.

"The United States would have to find a formula that would satisfy both sides and allow them to resume negotiations, perhaps an American commitment to Syria that Israel

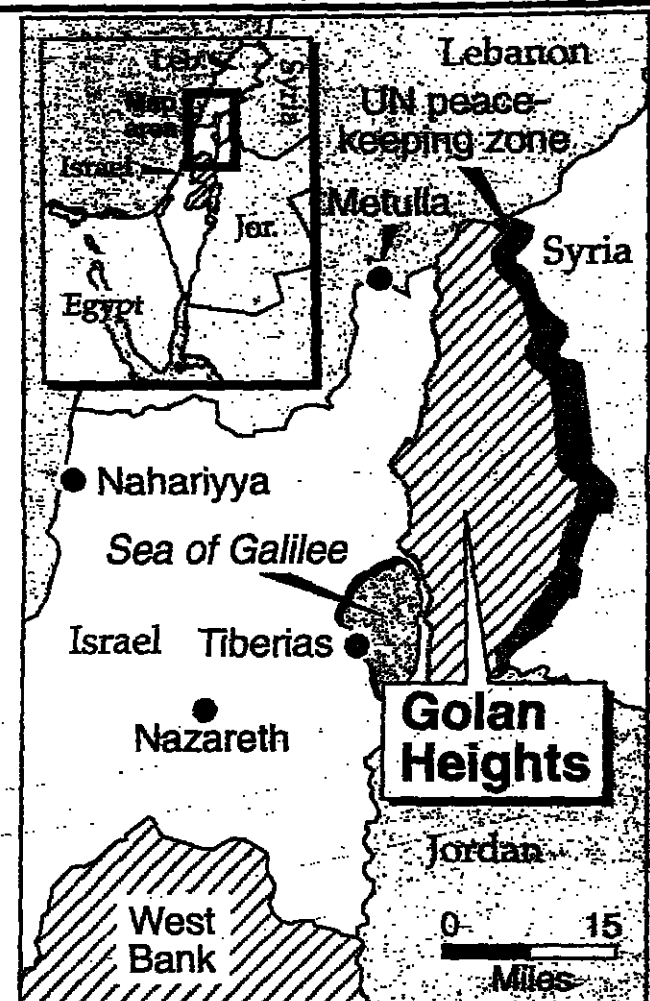
would withdraw from the Golan," said Maoz, an expert on Israel-Syria relations. "But it is very difficult to find a formula that would bridge the gap." Syrian President Hafez Assad, in a news conference in Cairo last September, said his conditions for resuming peace talks included mutual acceptance of the concept of trading land for peace and UN resolutions that call on Israel to give up occupied territory.

The Syrian leader also said he "was not in a rush" to reach a peace accord with Israel.

Still, with the United States favoring the deal just brokered between Israel and the Palestinians over Hebron, there is likely to be renewed pressure on both sides to bend.

Last week, outgoing Secretary of State Warren Christopher was quoted as urging Netanyahu to "test the willingness" of Syria to make peace, a statement interpreted by analysts here as a not-so-subtle suggestion to the Israeli leader that he should be the one to make an overture.

In an interview in Jerusalem, US Ambassador Martin Indyk



said he hopes the Hebron accord will encourage the Syrians and the Lebanese to resume their negotiations with the Israelis.

"We believe that it is time for the Arab world to suspend its disbelief over Israeli willingness to make peace, Indyk said.

But the diplomat also said the United States must re-

examine its own strategy regarding the Syrians and try to learn why, despite a remarkable 26 visits to Damascus by Christopher alone during the last four years, there has been no real progress. "It's very much in our interests to achieve a Syrian-Israeli peace, but we have to make a judgment about whether it's achievable," he said.

What's next for Netanyahu in West Bank?

By Barton Gellman
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—Some time after 2 am last Wednesday, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat pulled out a box of Cuban Monte Cristo cigars. He presented it with a flourish to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, then passed it around a room full of exhausted but happy negotiators.

The two leaders had just finished sealing their deal to pull Israel's army out of most of Hebron and rural parts of the West Bank. Shielded still behind closed doors as reporters waited outside, Netanyahu posed for photographs with each member of the Palestinian delegation from chief negotiator Saeb Erekat to Arafat's bodyguards.

There seemed to be nothing in Netanyahu's career to account for any part of that scene—for the wary good fellowship with the PLO chiefs, and especially for a territorial accord that guaranteed some form of partition in the West Bank.

What made it happen and what it means for the difficult negotiations to come are questions under continuing scrutiny here. It seems clear already, from Netanyahu's own testimony and that of close aides, that he did not change his bedrock belief in Israel's sovereignty over all of the West Bank. Less clear is which of the many pressures—domestic and foreign—pushed him to bend, and how much Netanyahu has really conceded in his own mind.

Thursday evening in the parliament's cabinet room, his face thick with pancake makeup, Netanyahu drummed his fingers awaiting a live television feed. It

was his first attempt to explain the new accord to his electorate, and he used it to deny that he or his Likud party had undergone a fundamental change of heart.

"There is no different Likud," he said. "There is a different reality which was forced upon us. ... Leadership always—always—is the meeting ground between vision and reality, between ideology and practicality."

Netanyahu's closest aides, in interviews, have had a tendency toward the literal when asked about the reality their boss ran into. Cabinet secretary Dani Naveh, for instance, said it was no more and no less than the existence of legal obligations undertaken by the previous Labor Party government and known collectively as the Oslo accords.

"The fact that there are international agreements signed by the Israeli government and ratified by the Knesset (parliament) is something no Israeli government could ignore," Naveh said. "You cannot do it. This is not something sovereign countries do, or democratic countries do."

But Netanyahu often argued that treaties do not bind one side alone. Hundreds of times since 1993, when Israel and the PLO reached "mutual recognition and started down the road toward negotiated Palestinian self-rule, Netanyahu said Arafat had violated "virtually every clause" of the agreements, and he strongly implied that Israel's promises were null and void.

Former science minister Benjamin



Begin, who resigned the post because of the Hebron pullout, explicitly made that argument. And former prime minister Yitzhak Shamir, the last Likud prime minister, scoffed at the very notion that there could be a binding international pact with "a terrorist gang" like Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization.

Netanyahu knew early on that Israel's public would not tolerate abandonment of the Oslo accords. Three years of poll data showed that as many as 70 percent of Israelis, and never fewer than half, wanted to continue the Israeli-Palestinian talks in the framework already agreed on.

As a candidate for prime minister last

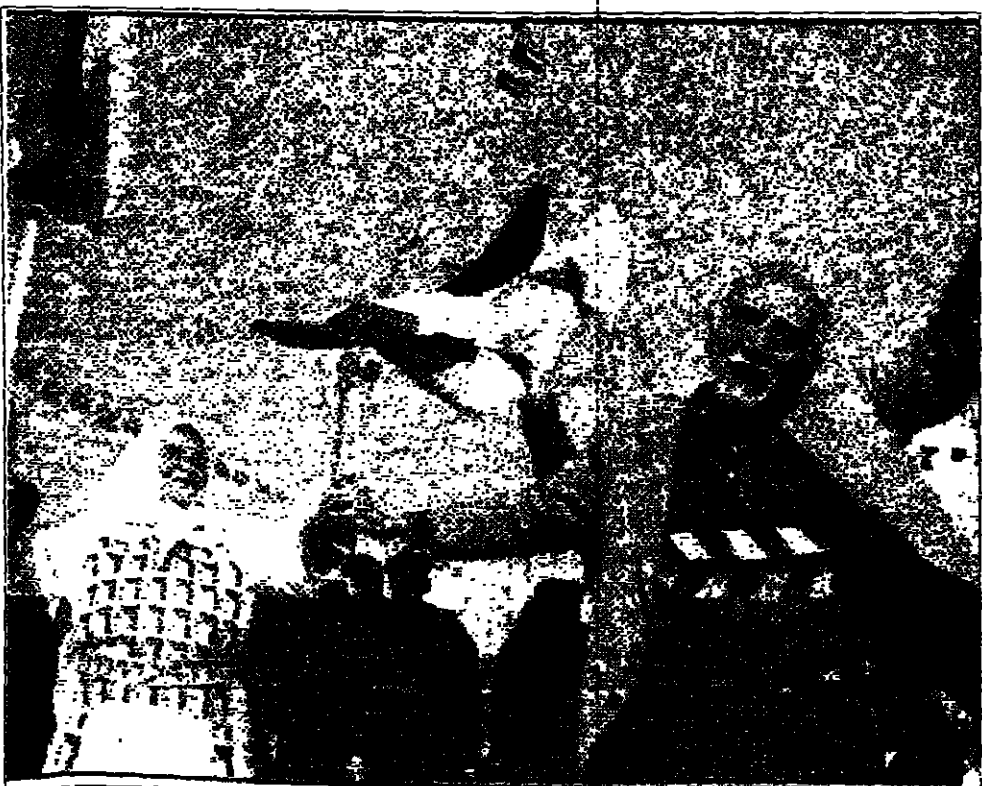
year, Netanyahu therefore trimmed his attacks. He promised not to halt the talks, but rather to cut a better deal. Every television advertisement began and ended with a logo in which a white dove flew toward the viewer and a swelling chorus sang, "Netanyahu: Making a secure peace."

Even so, in his first months in power, Netanyahu and his inner circle debated which of the previous government's promises had to be kept. Dore Gold, his chief foreign policy adviser, maintained in an interview that the policy planning group decided almost immediately that there was no way to get out of the agreement to withdraw from four-fifths of Hebron.

"We were looking at alternatives in terms of compliance, and we felt we had to comply in Hebron and they had to comply in Jerusalem," Gold said, referring to Israeli demands that Arafat close down his quasi-governmental offices there. "In our early discussions that was the trade-off."

Palestinian officials, backed by American mediators, tell the story differently. They note that in the first three months of Netanyahu's rule, he not only refused to meet with Arafat but ordered a halt to the work of joint committees in which day-to-day problems with prior agreements are discussed and agendas set for future bargaining.

"From the middle of June until September, he was just playing games on the Palestinian track," said one US official. "The Palestinians would say, 'We're being used for a photo opportunity.' He basically just stonewalled on Hebron redeployment. If he had decided to do it, he certainly wasn't testing the Palestin-



Hebron today! A Palestinian elderly couple carrying the Palestinian flag dance jubilantly in the streets of Hebron following the deployment of the Palestinian police force in the city. The Hebron deal signed with the Israelis last week limits the presence of the Palestinian police to only 400 officers. Although, they are allowed to carry light arms, it is very limited. Sources point out that they possess 200 pistols, and 100 rifles. It is said that this is no match for the 450 Israeli settlers, should a clash occur between the two. But in addition to the arsenal of weapons, they have, the settlers are guarded by 1200 Israeli soldiers. Whilst the Hebron agreement handed over 80 percent of the city to the Palestinian National Authority, 20 percent remain in Israeli hands. The West Bank Preventative Security Chief Col. Jibril Al Rajoub, who moved his headquarters, angered the Israeli government when he told a crowd of 3000 people last Saturday that the settlers have no place in Hebron and are "a stone on our chest."

فلسطين حرة

of
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Muhammad Asad's 'The Road to Mecca' Great thinker paves the way

The Road to Mecca \$25.00, 375 pages, hardcover. Distributed exclusively in North America by Threshold Books. Published by Threshold Books.

An excerpt from *The Road to Mecca* by Muhammad Asad:

ONE DAY—it was in September 1926—Elsa and I found ourselves travelling in the Berlin subway. It was an upper-class compartment. My eye fell casually on a well-dressed man opposite me, apparently a well-to-do businessman, with a beautiful briefcase on his knees and a large diamond ring on his hand. I thought idly how well the portly figure of this man fitted into the picture of prosperity which one encountered everywhere in Central Europe in those days: a prosperity the more prominent as it has come after years of inflation, when all economic life had been topsy-turvy and shabbiness of appearance the rule.

Most of the people were now well dressed and well fed, and the man opposite me was therefore no exception. But when I looked at his face, I did not seem to be looking at a happy face. He appeared to be worried; and not merely worried but acutely unhappy, with eyes staring vacantly ahead and the corners of his mouth drawn in as if in pain—but not in bodily pain. Not wanting to be rude, I turned my eyes away and saw next to him a lady of some elegance. She also had a strangely unhappy expression on her face, as if contemplating or experiencing something that caused her pain; nevertheless, her mouth was fixed in the stiff semblance of a smile which, I was certain, must have been habitual.

And then I began to look around at all the other faces in the compartment—faces belonging without exception to well-dressed, well-fed people; and in almost every one of them I could discern an expression of hidden suffering, so hidden that the owner of the face seemed to be quite unaware of it.

This was indeed strange. I had never before seen so many unhappy faces around me. Or was it perhaps that I had never before looked for what was now so loudly speaking in them? The impression was so strong that I mentioned it to Elsa; and she too began to look around her with the careful eyes of a painter accustomed to study human features. Then she turned to me, astonished, and said: "You are right. They all look as though they were suffering from some kind of ailment. What is going on in them?"

I knew that they did not—for otherwise they could not go on wasting their lives as they did, without any faith in binding truths, without any goal beyond the desire to raise their own "standard of living," without any hopes other than hav-

ing more material amenities, more gadgets, and perhaps more power...

When we returned home, I happened to glance at my desk on which lay open a copy of the Koran I had been reading earlier. Mechanically, I picked the book up to put it away, but just as I was about to close it, my eye fell on the open page before me, and I read:

You are obsessed by greed for more and more. Until you go down to your graves. Nay, but you will come to know! Nay, but you will come to know!

Nay, if you but knew it with the knowledge of certainty. You would indeed see the hell you are in.

In time, indeed, you shall see it with the eye of certainty. And on that day you will be asked what you have done with the boon of life.

For a moment I was speechless. I think the book shook in my hands.

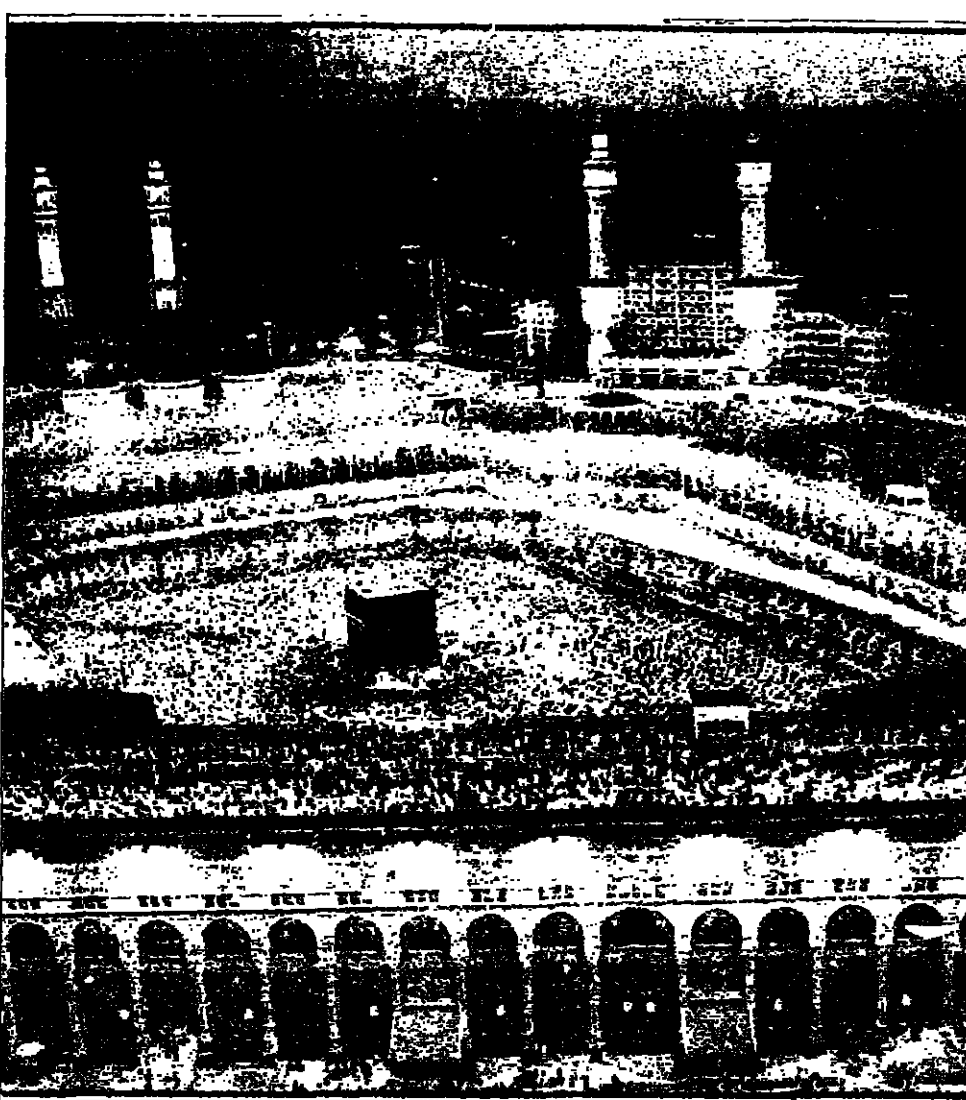
Then I handed it to Elsa. "Read this. Is it not an answer to what we say in the subway?"

It was an answer, an answer so decisive that all doubt was suddenly at an end. I knew now, beyond any doubt, that it was a God-inspired book! It was holding in my hand: for although it had been placed before me over thirteen centuries ago, it clearly anticipated something that could have become true only in this complicated, mechanized, phantom-ridden age of ours.

At all times people had known greed; but at no time before this had greed outgrown a mere eagerness to acquire things and become an obsession that blurred the sight of everything else: an irresistible craving to get, to do, to contrive more and more—more today than yesterday, and more tomorrow than today; a demon riding on the necks of men and whipping their hearts forward toward goals that tauntingly glitter in the distance but dissolve into contemptible nothingness as soon as they are reached, always holding out the promise of new goals ahead—goals still more brilliant, more tempting as long as they lie on the horizon, and bound to wither into further nothingness as soon as they come within grasp: and that hunger, that insatiable hunger for ever new goals gnawing at man's soul! Nay, if you but knew it you would see the hell you are in...

This, I saw, was not the mere human wisdom of a man of a distant past in distant Arabia. However wise he may have been, such a man could not by himself have foreseen the torment so peculiar to this twentieth century. Out of the Koran spoke a voice greater than the voice of Muhammad...

About Muhammad Asad Buried in the small Muslim cemetery in Grenada, in Spain is Muhammad Asad, one of the most prominent Muslim thinkers of the twentieth century. He was born in Leopold Weiss in Lwow, Galicia now in Poland the son of a Jewish barrister and grandson of an orthodox rabbi. He studied history of art and philosophy at Vienna University then went to Prague and later Berlin. Invited to Jerusalem by his uncle, Dorian Weiss, a prominent psychiatrist and early pupil of Freud... he encountered the Zionist Committee of Action but from the outset conceived a strong objection to Zionism, an objection which he personally conveyed to Dr Chaim Weizmann, the leader of the Zionist movement. He became a correspondent for Die Frankfurter Zei-



King Ibn Saud, a friend of the writer

ung, making a name for himself with dispatches from Palestine. He traveled extensively in the Mashreq and Maghreb. The turning point came in 1926 when he converted to Islam. Asad enjoyed a close friendship with King Ibn Saud. His love affair with Arabia was more intense than those of his European predecessors. After more travelling, Asad went to British India and befriended Muhammad Iqbal, the spiritual father of the idea of a separate Pakistan, whom he admired greatly. Iqbal persuaded Asad to abandon plans to travel to eastern Turkistan, China and Indonesia and to help elucidate the intellectual premises of the future Islamic state.

After an absence of 25 years from the West, Asad came to Paris and then to New York in early 1952, serving as Pakistan's Minister Plenipotentiary to the United Nations. His spiritual autobiography, *The Road to Mecca* (1954), which the Times Literary Supplement called "a narrative of great power and beauty," covered the first half of his life, including a journey in the summer of 1932 into the Empty Quarter of the Arabian Desert, which confirmed his conversion to his

new belief, and a conscious, wholehearted allegiance from one cultural environment to another.

However, Asad's chief ambition was to translate the Koran into English. First Switzerland and then Morocco provided the setting for the preparation of his magnum opus, *The Message of the Qur'an* (1980), dedicated to "people who think." In its intellectual engagement with the text and in the subtle and profound understanding of the pure classical Arabic of the Koran, Asad's interpretation is of a power and intelligence without rival in English.

Asad was saddened by the intellectual insularity of the Muslim world, the intolerance of the extremists, and was a powerful advocate of the rights of Muslim women. It was Asad's insistence that the constitution of Pakistan allow for the election of a woman leader that opened the way for Benazir Bhutto. "The great mistake (of the fundamentalists)," he once explained, "is that most of these leaders start with the huddle, criminal punishment. This is the end result of the sharia (Islamic Law), not the beginning. The beginning is the rights of the people. There is no punishment in Islam which has no corresponding right."

Excerpted from *The Guardian*

A factual handbook Jordan for the enlightened

AMMAN (Star)—Seldom do we get books on Jordan in English, especially from budding young authors. Getting away from the academic, what we have mostly are books or travel guides written by western writers.

Hassan Al Ayed's book titled simply *This is Jordan* is a brave attempt to give a comprehensive and genuine picture of Jordan from its establishment till its present day.

For a tightly compact book, it has a lot of information about different aspects of Jordan. In fact, people would be hard pressed to categorize the book. The author hotly denies that it is a travel guide, and he would be right. The book has a bit of everything, a concoction one might say, though this would be too harsh.

The author divides *This is Jordan* into five sections. The first is a political analysis from the great Arab Revolt of 1916 up to the last Arab-African Parliamentary Conference that was held in Parliament last year. Like all other parts, this section is no more than a page-turning exercise in political history. It seeks to regurgitate the memory of those who are interested in the political history of Jordan. The author takes us through the



HM King Hussein with the author

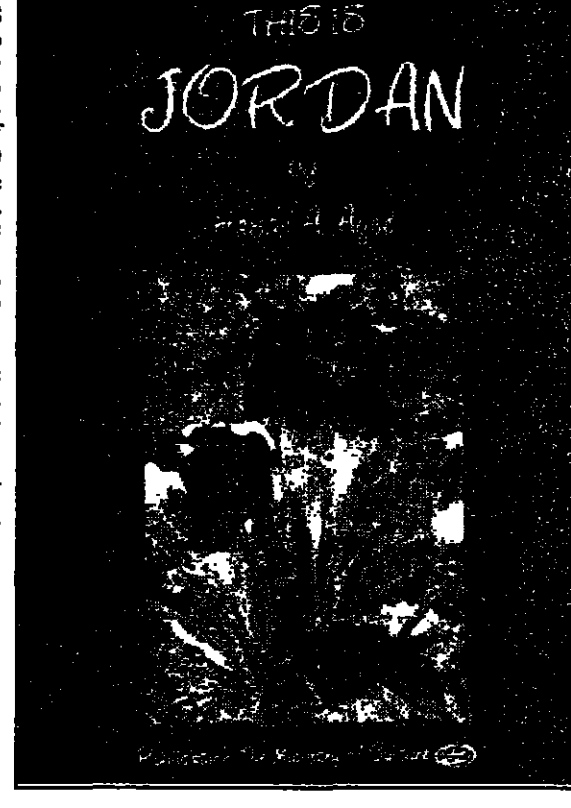
that is pact with statistics about such issues as the size of the population in Jordan, labor force and the social affairs budget.

I suppose the final three sections of the book could be termed in terms of a travelogue. On the contrary, for the inquisitive and the enlightened tourists, those sections are of major interests since they provide a gold mine on Jordan's historical sites. It talks just about every city in Jordan that has a

historical value. You would expect the author to talk about Amman, Jerash, Petra and Madaba. But there are other interesting towns, villages and cities which other travel guides frequently leave out.

For instance, we are introduced to Umm Jimal, Qasr El-Hallabat, Dhiban, and Mukawir and Hasbani.

There is also a complete subsection on museums in Jordan and the different handicrafts and folklore in the country. We have to say that these sections



are very much designed with the tourist in mind since there is such sub-headings as food and drink, restaurants, financial services, communications and weights and measures.

This is a good bargain, one may argue. The reader of this book would get everything under one package, in short a good holiday with all the trappings to go with it so to speak.

Hassan Al Ayed is an enterprising writer, who wants to write in English. A political researcher in the Lower House of Parliament. His first book was written in Arabic about Jordan and the Gulf Crisis. This present book is published by the Ministry of Culture.

Eisenhower regretted he pushed for Sinai withdrawal

By Joseph Lerner

WHEN PRESIDENT Bill Clinton won his second term, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak joined forces to put out a column urging him to follow the example of President Dwight Eisenhower to "stand up to Bibi Netanyahu."

"Remember what Eisenhower did to Israel in Sinai!" is embedded in American middle east policy. For Zionists it is a reminder of the US at its roughest. For Israel's opponents, it is the optimal standard.

In Israel's 1956 joint military undertaking with Britain and France, Eisenhower warned Israel of severe consequences were she not to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and Sinai. All US assistance would end and financial contributions to Israeli institutions would lose their tax exempt status. There would be serious UN declarations and the USSR might intervene. After only two days of these warnings Israel complied.

Peter Golden in his "authorized biography" of Max M. Fisher "Quiet Diplomat" (1992) relates that in October 1965 Fisher met with President Eisenhower in Gettysburg to get agreement to accept the UJA medal for his role in the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps twenty years earlier. French General Pierre Keonig leader of the French Resistance and British Field Marshall Alexander were also to be honored.

Golden reports that toward the end of the visit Eisenhower "wistfully commented 'You know, Max, looking back at Suez, I regret what I did. I never should have pressured Israel to evacuate the Sinai'" (all references are to pages xvii and xvix). Eisenhower's remark astonished Fisher.

Fisher was not the only one who was told of Eisenhower's change of mind. Nixon told Golden: "Eisenhower...in the 1960s told me—and I am sure he told others—that he thought the action that was taken (at Suez) was one he regretted. He thought it was a mistake."

Although Fisher knew this for 27 years before publication of his "authorized biography" he evidently never sought to give it



publicity beyond the biography. It is still essentially unknown.

Had Eisenhower's rethought position been known in 1965, it might well have been helpful to Israel.

After reading the biography, I wrote Fisher asking why he hadn't publicized this change in Eisenhower's thinking. Unfortunately, he canceled our scheduled meeting in Jerusalem.

The Gettysburg visit brought a change in Fisher's life aspirations. Golden relates that Fisher "almost as an afterthought" as they started to depart said: "Max, if I had a Jewish advisor working for me, I doubt I would have handled the situation the same way. I would not have forced the Israelis back." Fisher was "struck...with the impact of epiphany. If Fisher had been unsure of the extent of power an unofficial advisor could wield with a president, he now had his answer, and from an unimpeachable source: the influence exerted could be decisive. It was exactly the role Fisher hoped to play."

Author Peter Golden regarded Fisher's 1965 Gettysburg visit with Eisenhower so crucial that he related it in biography's introduction titled "Eisenhower and the Revelation of Sinai." Yet, somehow that revelation escaped the attention of historians.

The 'great' leader as a rouge writer: Sympathy for the despot

By Moamar Qaddafi.

From "Run Away to Hell", a short story by Libyan President Col. Muammar Qaddafi in *The Village, the City, the Suicide of the Astronaut, and Other Stories*, a collection of Qaddafi's writing published by the General Egyptian Book Organization in Cairo. The book is a bestseller in Egypt. Translated from Arabic by Anton Shammas.

HOW CRUEL Humans can be when they become a tyrannical mob, a torrent that has no mercy on those who stand in its way, that does not listen to cries for help. The tyranny of a single man is the most tolerable of tyrannies; after all, he is just one man and can be removed from power in a single blow. The tyranny of the mob is far worse. For who can stand in the face of the torrent's overwhelming power?

I love the freedom of masses; I adore those who have smashed their shackles after years of suffering. But I also feel apprehensive about them. When happy and content, the masses are full of compassion, and they put their chosen one on a pedestal: Hannibal, Pericles, Savonarola, Danton, Robespierre, Musolini, Nixon. But how cruel the masses become when they are enraged: they hemlocked Hannibal, burned Savonarola at the stake, guillotined Danton, broke Robespierre's jaw, dragged Musolini's corpse through the streets, and spat in Nixon's face when he left the White House.

This is the flame that scorches my back. I stand before a loving yet ruthless society, before people who know all too well what they want from the individual but don't care what the individual wants from them, before the masses that love without even showing that love by, say, offering a seat in the

movie theater or a table in a café. What can I do in an insane, modern city whose inhabitants gnaw at me when they see me: "Build a new house for us, pave a path to the sea, plant a garden, catch a whale, unite us in wedlock, kill a dog for us, buy us a cat!"

I'm a poor, wandering Bedouin who doesn't even have a birth certificate. I eat without washing my hands and kick whatever happens to be in my way, even if it might smash the window of a store or hit an old woman. I've never tasted alcohol, soda water, or Pepsi. I drink rainwater from my cupped hands, and use the hem of my cloak to screen the tadpoles from the well water. I don't know what money looks like, yet those who bump into me always ask me for something or other. I have nothing to give. All I have was stolen from the hands of thieves, the mouths of mice, the fangs of dogs, and I bestowed it upon the city dwellers.

But the people are impatient and insist that they get it all instantly. Mine is a unique case. I'm the only one who has nothing, yet I'm harassed and begged almost on an hourly basis.

That's why I ran away to the desert, alone, ran away from you and your breathing down my neck—to save myself. Your breaths annoyed me, invaded my privacy, violated my being. Your breaths followed me like rabid dogs, salivating along your modern, mad city streets.

So leave me to my worries. Stop chasing me. Stop pointing me out to your children so they can run after me and taunt me wherever I go. Why do you take away my peace of mind? Why do you deny me the freedom to roam your streets? I am as human as you are.



Libya's Strongman, Col. MUAMMAR EL-QADDAFI

t Bank?

AROUND TOWN



Giusiano to perform pieces by Chopin

● Piano lovers are in for a real treat as the National Music Conservatory (NMC) of Noor Al Hussein Foundation presents renowned French pianist, Philippe Giusiano, in a Chopin piano recital. The event will be held in cooperation with the French Cultural Centre under the patronage of the French Ambassador Mr Bernard Bajelet on Saturday 25 January at the Main Theatre of the Royal Cultural Centre.

Giusiano studied at Conservatoire National de Région de Marseille then at Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris. He participated from 1989 to 1993 in amateur performances at the "Holland Music Sessions." He had the chance to present himself at the famous concert halls of Amsterdam and then execute a world tour in March of 1993. At seventeen, he was named Laureate of the 22nd Frederic Chopin Competition, thus becoming the youngest pianist to receive this title yet. In 1995, he presented himself at this prestigious competition, and won second Grand prix (first ever appointed).



Munir Bashir

Improvising new dimensions of music

By Zeina Shahbaz
Special to The Star

Seldom do we find an Arab musician like the Iraqi oud player Munir Bashir who, with his inimitable musical talent, could add a new and revolutionary dimension to Arabic music. Bashir's record of outstanding musical recitals brought him to the forefront.

Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, the National Music Conservatory (NMC), last week, presented an oud recital by Bashir at the Royal Cultural Center (RCC). The event comes as part of four musical performances organized by the NMC in celebration of the holy month of Ramadan.

In an "Evening of Meditation on the Oud," Bashir gave an exhilarating performance featuring several compositions and improvisations on various Arab maqams. He excelled in moving the audience to experience a world of imagination beyond tangible reality. It was without any doubt a journey of self-revelation into the sublime.

A percussion graduate of the NMC, Muhammad Ulayyan accompanied the great musician with his tambourine twice during the show. The audience enjoyed a harmony between the two musical instruments.

Bashir began his performance with "A Journey With the Oud." Such a journey was able to carry the audience into a higher state of being.

Bashir explained that by this journey one is able to go through different parts of the human emotions realized after a true moment of meditation.

The recital also included a number of maqams which originally go back to the Abbasid Age. With music, the audience gradually transcended into a spiritual world of authentic tradition.

At the backstage, and as Bashir was playing his music, another artist was painting a picture. To prove that music and art are inter-related, Asem Abdul-Sattar, an Iraqi painter, managed to draw Bashir's music into a concrete painting. Contrary to the fact that Bashir's music seemed, at times, sad, the resulting painting of Abdul Sattar was colourful. In other words, Abdul Sattar moved on canvass his personal absorption of music which might vary according to the individual.

Bashir insisted that no specific color could unify all his compositions. "Improvisation," he said, "is connected to the heart and soul. It can never be repeated." He explained that music is part of the human experience and that each individual receives it differently. This means that Bashir was seeking all through his musical life to create a distinct style. It seems that improvisation is an advanced stage in music that nobody can master unless he absorbs everything related to the world of music.

Bashir comes from a family of musicians. He started learning music while still in his

"mother's womb." He was influenced most by his father who made him his first oud when he was five years old. He spent six years as a pupil of Sharif Mulyiddin Haydar at the Institute of Arab Music in Baghdad, learning the Oud and Cello. Eventually, he received his Ph.D in music from the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, Hungary.

Among Bashir's many great achievements to the world of music is the sixth string. The oud traditionally has five strings. Bashir thought that by adding a sixth string the oud would assume different musical dimensions. It would gain "extraordinary power."

At the end of the brilliant recital, Bashir received a deserving standing ovation. He left the stage with his oud, his "soul-mate," which represents his "whole life." Indeed, Bashir's extraordinary performance was one of the highlights of the musical events in Jordan this year.



In commemoration of a great cameraman

By Fathieh Saudi
Special to The Star

It is a tragedy that the high-jacking of the recent Ethiopian aircraft and then its crash claimed the life of Mohammad Amin, the Kenyan photographer and author of the wonderful book *Journey Through Jordan*.

I had the chance recently to talk to a friend in Paris about the book. I explained to him how Amin's book is the first of its kind because it has marvelous photos and text which highlight the different cultural, and historical aspects of Jordan.

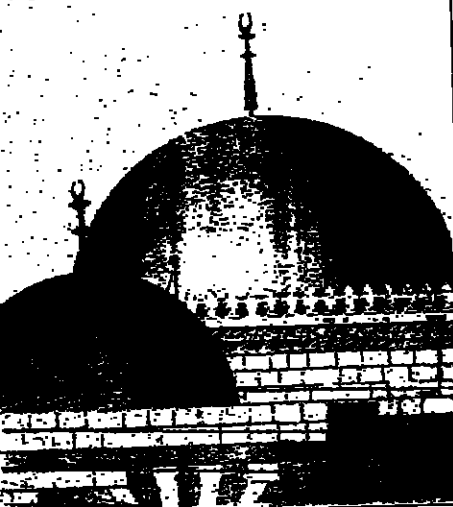
It occurred to me afterwards that it would be a great idea to introduce the book to the French public. The photos and words of Amin cast magic on the places photographed. They best represent the beauty of the setting and reveal the author's love for the people and the places.

After all that I told my friend about the book she said "but this photographer died yesterday." "Impossible," I replied. "I just talked to him on the telephone few days ago." Yet, my friend was affirmative saying that the French *Le Monde* newspaper announced that he was among the victims of the crashed plane.

The *Le Monde*, which described Amin as the Great Cameraman quoted him as

JOURNEY THROUGH JORDAN

MOHAMMED AMIN - DUNCAN WELLES - SAM KILEY



saying that "the day when I can't write any story, will be the day of my death."

Over the past 30 years, Amin has been considered as one of the renowned professionals in images. In addition, he had skill-

fully written books about the countries he visited and photographed its places. He had several books about Africa. Such features as courage, modesty, and kindness endeared him to his peers and mates.

Amin was born in Nairobi and started his work at the age of 13 covering the Safari Rally in Africa. He worked with *Vinews* where he became a photographer operating in the middle of conflicts in Africa and in countries such as Lebanon, Yemen and Afghanistan. He is remembered for those photos about the famine in Ethiopia. It is by these photos that Bob Geldof was inspired to give a live aid concert to help the victims in that country.

Amin lost his arm by a rocket that hit Adis Ababa, yet this accident didn't dampen his hopes and he continued his work with a special camera that was adapted especially for him. Queen Elizabeth of Britain named him as member of the British empire.

Unfortunately, Amin died before I could meet with him. I just get to know him two weeks ago, through several phone calls, we became like friends, and we have ideas and projects to develop together. I feel today the necessity to continue this ambitious project and translate his book into French. But very sadly this edition will be titled *In Commemoration of Mohammad Amin*.

Orbit gears up for second Festival of Arabic Song



Ragha

Al Hinnawi

THE ORBIT Satellite Television and Radio Network confirmed the dates for the Orbit Second Festival of Arabic Song, which will be held between 8-11 February at the Forum in Beirut. The four-night festival, which coincides with Eid Al Fitr, features some of the top performers from the Arab world.

The Orbit Second Festival of Arabic Song will be presented this year by a number of top stars, including Lebanese actress Rula Hammad, star of the famous Arabic series *Al Assifa Tahubbun Maratayn* featured on Al Thania. Returning to this year's edition of the festival will be Kuwaiti actor Mohammed Al Mansour, whose presence received a thunderous ovation at last year's festivities, as well as Egyptian star Farouk Al Fishawi. Other top stars joining the event will be Luma Lawand, Ragha, Liliane Na'aseh, Alcega Da'oud and Saud Al Dosary.

Each night of the Gala will feature four different singers, bringing the audience "four nights of a thousand stars" once again. Among this year's performers are Warda, Nawal Al Zoghbi, Hicham Abbas, George Wassouf, Mayada Al Hinnawi, Ragheb Alameh, Hani Shaker, Salah Al Lami, Abdel Majid Abdullah, Diana Haddad, Mohammad Al Bloushi, Assi Hilani, Najwa Karam and Midhat Saleh. The festival will also feature today's promising new stars, including Egypt's Ghada Rajab, Lebanon's George Al Rasy, Abdo Shareef of Morocco and Rashed Al Farisi of Saudi Arabia.

The Orbit Second Festival of Arabic Song is an exclusive tribute by the Orbit Network to the world of Arabic music. The event will be held at the recently constructed Forum of Beirut, one of the largest venues in the Middle East, with a seating capacity of 5,000.

AGENDA

Exhibitions

■ Contemporary Arab Artists Exhibition, The New Collection at the Darat Al Fanun, continues till 27 February.

■ Works by Muhammad Ali Shaker at The Orient House, Shmeisani, continues till 30 January.

■ L'Institut du Monde Arabe at The French Cultural Center, runs from 20 January till 6 February.

■ Mini Bazaar and open house at Um El Kumdum. Lithographs, old postcards and photographs on Jerusalem, Chinese paintings, arts and crafts, fresh farm produce, off the Airport highway on the way to the Arabian Horse Club, first left at the top of the hill. Friday 31 January from 11:00 am till 5:00 pm. Tel: 664805.



Films

■ Cinema Paradiso at the French Cultural Center, 27 January, at 8:30 pm.

Concert

■ Piano recital by Philippe Giusiano at The Royal Cultural Center, 25 January at 8:00 pm.

SCRAPBOOK

By Manal Omar

New Ramadan experience

EACH YEAR one of the most exciting times is the anticipation of Ramadan. Ramadan always represented a special guest knocking at the door. This year the special guest was anticipated with open arms, as a new Ramadan experience promised to accompany.

The Ramadan rituals of the past twenty-one years could not answer the question which lingered in the back of my mind. Since this would be the first Ramadan in a Muslim country, what was there to expect? Two weeks into Ramadan and the experience has been beyond comparison.

The very spiritual experience of Ramadan in Jordan alone provides a new definition for me. The well-known struggle of fasting during college years or at work while surrounded by people eating and drinking at leisure has vanished. Instead, I am greeted by other fellow Muslims who share the same spiritual worship with me.

The sound of the athan echoing throughout the streets startles me each time, symbolizing a unity the entire nation prepares to break their fast at the same time. The past two weeks of Ramadan have been filled with a sense of comradeship never experienced during Ramadan before.

At the same time, the Iftars have transformed into a family and community festival. The quick Iftars at burger king after class or a gathering in Bryons's Grill is a memory already erased. In its place is the warm laughter of relatives gathered around the dinner table with a traditional Arabic meal. Instead of gathering in a cold basement for Taraweeh prayers, the experience of going to a mosque proves to be all the more rewarding. Even Sahor is not the usual cold pizza or cereal I grew accustomed to, but, rather, a light meal shared by the entire family.

Living in America all my life had many benefits and provided the most wonderful memories. Nonetheless, it also robbed me of the wonderful experience of Ramadan I have witnessed during the past two weeks.

The thirty days of Ramadan are filled with so many blessings. It is a chance to become closer to our people as we sympathize with those who are less fortunate. It is a chance to become closer to our Creator, as we thank Him for the many blessings. Ramadan in the Arab world provides a special flavor, as you are reminded of your identity and the roots of your existence. It is with a great excitement that I look forward to the last ten days of Ramadan, and the promise of a new experience still whispers in my ear.

THE FAR SIDE

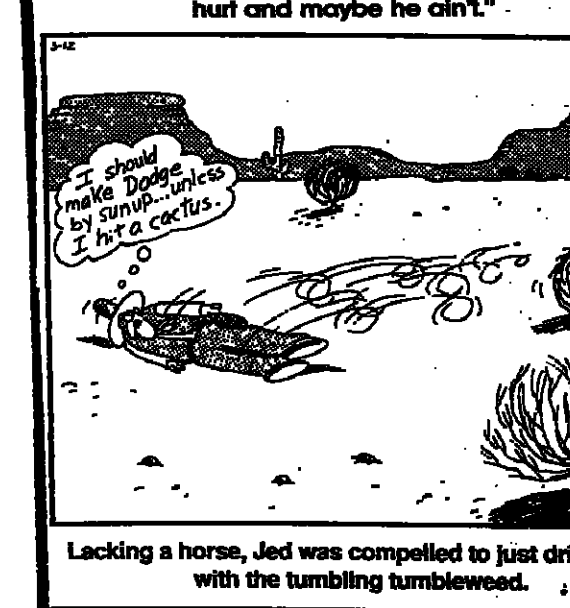
By GARY LARSON



Feb. 22, 1952: Veterinarians attempt the first skunk de-scenting operation.



"Just stay in the cab, Vern... maybe that bear's hurt and maybe he ain't."



Lacking a horse, Jed was compelled to just drift along with the tumbling tumbleweed.

More than a calendar

AMMAN (Star)—Since 1993, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been working to issue a special calendar at the onset of every new year. The aim is to link the past with the present and open new horizons for a better future.

For this year's calendar, the ICRC was inspired by the notion of Islamic heritage.

It highlights traditional examples that go in line with the rules and conventions of modern international humanitarian law that are crystallized in the four Geneva conventions signed in 1949 and their complementary protocols passed in 1977.

Seeking to talk about traditional stories as the focus for the 1997 calendar, and coupled with illustrative pictures, is a genuine attempt to look for the basic principles for today's humanitarian laws.

Before deciding to carry out such a project, the ICRC asked itself whether international humanitarian law are deep-rooted in people's tradition?

In this respect, this year's calendar is full of illustrations and well-known Arab mythical stories like Al Zeer Salem, Asfara Wa Abia, Al Al Zalbag, Saif Bin Thil Yazan, Hassan Wa Naqmah, Al Thaher Beihars, Sirt Bani Hilal, etc.

The traditional stories portray their heroes as honorable and pious. On the other hand, such stories also include much about inhumane practices, the responsibility of which is borne usually by characters who are unfavorably and harshly portrayed by the writers and tellers of these stories.

The ICRC sought to project the humanitarian aspects of rules and laws as opposed to the brutal and inhumane ones.

And hence, the stories are expressions of the practical need that forced mankind to adopt human principles agreed upon and endorsed by the international community and to put them in the framework to which all parties must commit themselves.



Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

La Jordanie, Israël et l'Autorité palestinienne jouent la carte du tourisme

Une campagne destinée à stimuler le tourisme dans la région va débuter aujourd'hui dans les quotidiens américains à l'initiative de la Jordanie, d'Israël et de l'Autorité palestinienne. Cette campagne centrée sur le thème «la paix est belle à voir» a été organisée à la suite de l'accord conclu sur Hébron.

«Qui nous sommes tous engagés par la paix. Et aujourd'hui Israéliens, Jordanais et Palestiniens ouvrent leurs bras et leurs cœurs pour lancer une chaleureuse invitation au peuple américain à venir visiter nos contrées, qui ont donné naissance à tant de foi et tant d'histoire», indique le texte des publicités. Des publicités signées par le ministre israélien du Tourisme, le ministre du Tourisme et des Antiquités du royaume hachémite de Jordanie ainsi que par le ministre du Tourisme et des Antiquités de l'Autorité palestinienne.

Durant les onze premiers mois de 1996, le nombre de touristes arrivés en Israël a baissé de 5% par rapport à la même période de 1995. Une diminution due notamment aux attentats suicide et aux affrontements israélo-palestiniens.



SECON

Je ne sais pas jusqu'à quand durera le problème des transports aériens en Jordanie pour les vols internationaux, mais il est urgent d'améliorer la situation. Car en plus de continuer à accumuler des dettes, Royal Jordanian ne cesse de ternir sa réputation à l'étranger. Récemment à l'heure, elle a en effet pour fâcheuse habitude de retarder ses passagers.

En prenant la semaine dernière un avion qui m'amenait à Copenhague en passant par Athènes, j'ai pu moi-même le constater. Le vol de la Royal Jordanian a eu une heure dix de retard, soit exactement le laps de temps dont je disposais pour transiter. Inutile donc de préciser que j'ai ainsi raté mon avion alors que je devais assister le lendemain à une importante conférence internationale.

Il n'est pas non plus important de revenir sur la difficulté de prendre très tôt le lendemain un vol arrivant à Copenhague quelques heures à peine avant le début de cette conférence.

Par contre, il est important de mentionner que le vol de retour, une semaine après, connaissait les mêmes retards. Aucun rendez-vous important de m'attendait cette fois, mais le fait de se retrouver ainsi deux fois de suite dans la même situation traduit un net manque de respect.

Les critiques à l'encontre de la compagnie jordanienne ne cessent de se faire entendre en Jordanie. Il est pratiquement impossible qu'un avion d'RJ fasse un vol sans s'arrêter quelque part. Comme les autobus, RJ ramasse des passagers un peu partout.

La qualité des repas servis à bord laisse elle aussi à désirer. Pourquoi la compagnie nationale jordanienne ne servirait-elle pas des plats typiques, tels que du mensef ou du hummos, qui seraient moins chers et qui resteraient frais plus longtemps?

Ces problèmes pratiques rencontrés par les utilisateurs de la Royal Jordanian ne doivent bien sûr pas être isolés de la situation globale que connaît cette compagnie. Mais malgré son déficit chronique, RJ doit apprendre à respecter ses passagers et à remplir ses engagements pour réussir à améliorer son image.

Cette compagnie ne peut de toute façon pas continuer à fonctionner ainsi. Et si c'est uniquement en raison de difficultés financières que la Jordanie ne peut pas se permettre de doter d'une bonne compagnie de transports aériens, elle doit alors penser à privatiser sa compagnie aérienne. Elle peut en tout cas, dans l'immédiat, déjà réfléchir aux moyens de résoudre les problèmes de gestion et aux modifications permettant d'améliorer le service offert.

Sa'eda Kilani

Le Jourdain, on y revient
Tous les jeudis dans le Star
645380

Elections législatives

Réformer la loi électorale

Pour les prochaines élections législatives jordanienues, une réforme du mode de scrutin est vivement souhaitée dans le pays. Si le système de vote «une personne, une voix» n'est pas remis en question, le découpage électoral actuel est lui controversé.

Depuis plusieurs semaines, colloques, ateliers et séminaires se succèdent à Amman pour étudier la question de la réforme de la loi électorale, sujet objet de nombreuses controverses depuis 1993 entre le gouvernement et l'opposition. Si la date précise des prochaines élections n'a pas encore été fixée, une chose est sûre: 1997 sera en Jordanie l'année d'élections législatives.

Organisé début janvier conjointement par le Centre d'études de l'Université du Yarmouk (Irbid) et le centre d'études al-Riyada (Amman), le dernier atelier de réflexion en date a duré trois jours pendant lesquels une soixantaine d'hommes politiques, syndicalistes, chercheurs et parlementaires se sont réunis pour discuter des principes de la nouvelle loi électorale.

Dans son discours d'ouverture, le Premier ministre jordanien Abdul Karim Kabariti a défini la position du pouvoir exécutif: «Il n'est pas question de supprimer le principe du système «une personne, une voix». Mais il faut envisager une amélioration de son application, et notamment au niveau de la répartition des circonscriptions électorales».

Face à l'opposition violente manifestée par les représentants de certains partis politiques à l'égard de ce principe, le Premier ministre a laissé une déclaration écrite après son départ qui a été lue à la fin du premier jour. Un texte dans lequel il rappelait que «la loi électorale devait être une œuvre nationale et non celle du

gouvernement unique», la position de ce dernier n'est qu'une opinion parmi les autres.

Cette mise au point n'a pas suffi à atténuer les attaques contre le système de la voix unique durant les deux jours de discussions qui suivirent. En fait, l'opposition que rencontre ce système électoral émane des revendications de certains partis politiques ou groupes tribaux peu attachés au principe d'équité entre les citoyens.

Le principe d'une voix par électeur est en effet conforme aux principes des droits de l'Homme. Mais il faut pour cela que le découpage des circonscriptions soit juste.

Hanté par l'adoption du traité de paix avec Israël qui était alors déjà dans l'air, le gouvernement avait précipitamment introduit en septembre 1993 le principe «une personne, une voix» pour les élections législatives à la place du mode de scrutin plurinominal à un tour adopté en 1989.

Or, le découpage électoral retenu a permis au pouvoir de s'assurer d'une majorité favorable au Parlement. Un découpage qui n'a jusqu'à présent pas été modifié. Mais le contexte ayant depuis changé, et avec notamment la signature du traité israélo-jordanien, le gouvernement semble aujourd'hui prêt à revoir partiellement le découpage électoral.



Les Jordaniens seront appelés à voter en 1997 pour des élections législatives.

Pour les participants présents à ce colloque, d'autres modifications s'imposent, tels que l'abaissement de l'âge du vote de 19 à 18 ans ou la simplification de la procédure administrative du processus électoral. Une augmentation du nombre de députés est aussi souhaitée. L'Assemblée nationale qui compte actuellement 80 députés, devrait passer à 100 pour permettre une meilleure représentation de certaines parties du pays, telles que Zarka, Irbid, Koura, Maqraq ou la vallée du Jourdain. L'idée de l'introduction d'un quota de dix sièges pour les femmes a aussi été débattue. L'Assemblée actuelle ne comptant qu'une seule femme, Toujan Fayyal.

En ce qui concerne le déroulement du scrutin, la mise

en place d'une autorité indépendante de contrôle a été recommandée pour assurer une plus grande neutralité. La couverture médiatique de la campagne électorale a elle aussi été abordée. Une réforme de la loi actuelle devrait en effet permettre à toutes les tendances et tous les candidats d'exposer leurs programmes électoraux.

Toutes ces suggestions formulées pendant trois jours vont bien sûr contribuer à alimenter l'important débat sur la réforme de la loi électorale.

Il reste aujourd'hui à attendre les réactions du gouvernement et de l'Assemblée nationale, ainsi que les réformes proposées.

Suleiman Sweiss

Négociations israélo-palestiniennes

De nouvelles étapes

Après la signature d'Hébron, les Palestiniens espèrent que le processus de paix va revenir sur ses rails. Les concessions qu'ils ont faites doivent permettre de franchir de nouvelles étapes.

Le soleil de la liberté s'est enfin levé sur Hébron après de longues semaines de négociations interrompues plusieurs fois par la violence et le sang. «Pour la première fois, 88% des députés israéliens votent pour la paix», a déclaré le président Arafat à la suite de la ratification de l'accord d'Hébron par la Knesset. Proclamant dimanche à Hébron devant 50.000 personnes que la ville est éternellement libérée, il s'est félicité du fait que l'OLP ait pu parvenir à un accord avec les deux parties du peuple israélien, la gauche et la droite, indépendamment de la politique changeante du Premier ministre Benjamin à propos du respect des accords.

Cette signature de l'accord d'Hébron n'a cependant été possible que grâce à l'acceptation par les Palestiniens de revenir sur les accords de paix initiaux. Ainsi, les Palestiniens ont été forcés d'abandonner certaines de leurs conditions qui figuraient dans l'accord de Washington, et notamment de retarder la date finale du redéploiement des troupes israéliennes des villes palestiniennes.

Devant initialement se terminer en septembre 1997, celui-ci doit être, selon les négociateurs, achevé en mai 1998.

Malgré ces concessions, la signature de l'accord d'Hébron traduit un réel progrès dans les relations israélo-palestiniennes.

Un véritable change-

ment est en train de s'opérer au sein de la droite israélienne qui est sur le point de renoncer au terme Judée-Samarie pour désigner la Cisjordanie. Un ministre israélien a même proposé aux colons de devenir les «ressortissants palestiniens» s'ils souhaitent rester en Cisjordanie après le redéploiement des soldats israéliens.

Si le règlement de la question d'Hébron a pris un tel retard, c'est essentiellement en raison de l'ensemble des questions en attente qui suivent cet accord. Selon la nouvelle date retenue, le premier redéploiement doit s'effectuer à partir du 28 février et se poursuivre pendant douze mois. D'autres points doivent désormais être rapidement abordés. Ainsi, la libération des prisonniers palestiniens doit rapidement intervenir. Les Palestiniens prévoient celle-ci avant la fin du mois de ramadan.

Ensuite, la question du libre passage entre Gaza et la Cisjordanie doit être discutée. Les Israéliens ne semblent pas pressés de voir ce libre passage se réaliser pour des raisons politiques, mais aussi économiques.

Actuellement, l'économie palestinienne est en effet fortement liée à celle d'Israël. Une situation qui pourrait changer si les échanges entre Gaza et la Cisjordanie étaient facilités.

Bien que les obstacles restent nombreux, une chose est certaine. En attendant la main à Yasser Arafat le 15 janvier dernier, Benjamin Netanyahu a déclenché le compte à rebours de l'application complète des accords israélo-palestiniens.

De Gaza, Hassan Balawi



Benjamin Netanyahu, le négociateur américain Denis Ross, et Yasser Arafat après la signature de l'accord sur Hébron.

Concert

Le virtuose Giusiano à Amman

Le pianiste français Philippe Giusiano offrira samedi un concert à Amman. A 23 ans, ce jeune musicien s'est déjà illustré dans de nombreux concours internationaux, et notamment le prestigieux concours Frédéric Chopin.

C'est un jeune virtuose français qu'accueillera samedi soir le Centre culturel royal dans le cadre des soirées du Ramadan. A 23 ans, Philippe Giusiano s'est déjà illustré dans de très nombreux concours français et internationaux de piano. En remportant le deuxième grand prix du concours Chopin de Varsovie en 1995, un concours dédié depuis 1927 à l'interprétation de la musique de Frédéric Chopin, ce jeune musicien est entré dans le cercle des grands pianistes internationaux.

Philippe Giusiano a découvert le piano à l'âge de cinq ans, étudiant pendant sept années au Conservatoire national de la région de Marseille. A douze ans, il entre au Conservatoire national supérieur de musique de Paris où il obtient, à seize ans, un prix de piano à l'unanimité.

Une année plus tard, il est le plus jeune lauréat du concours Chopin, mais ne parviendra pas

à atteindre la finale de ce concours.

Cette première expérience polonaise va marquer le début de la carrière internationale de Philippe Giusiano. Il va participer pendant cinq années aux Holland Music sessions qui lui permettront d'effectuer plusieurs tournées à l'étranger, et notamment une tournée mondiale en 1993 qui l'amènera au Carnegie Hall de New-York.

Après une période d'études au Mozarteum de Salzbourg, il a rejoint en 1994 le conservatoire d'Amsterdam. Et entre deux tournées, il retrouve l'hexagone où il participe à de nombreux festivals.

Invité par le Centre culturel français d'Amman, Philippe

Giusiano a prévu de jouer pour sa prestation jordanienne un hommage au compositeur français Robert Casadesu, avant d'offrir un récital Frédéric Chopin comprenant les quatre Impromptus, deux Scherzos, et douze Etudes.

Le Jourdain



Philippe Giusiano

C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

Concert

Philippe Giusiano, jeune musicien français, proposera le 25 janvier à 20h00, un concert de piano au Centre culturel royal. Des places sont en vente au CCF.

Exposition

«L'Institut du monde arabe», jusqu'au 2 février. Dans quelques mois, l'Institut du monde arabe accueillera à Paris une exposition consacrée à la Jordanie et ses richesses archéologiques. Le Centre culturel français vous propose de découvrir cet endroit créé pour assurer une meilleure diffusion de la culture arabe en Europe.

Cinéma

Fin du cycle consacré à l'acteur Philippe Noiret au Centre culturel français. Le 27 janvier à 20h30, Cinéma paradiso de Giuseppe Tornatore (1989).

Mona Qaddoumi



Pour beaucoup de jeunes, fumer donne une certaine contenance, à l'image de leur entourage.

cigarette que le tabac entraîne des affections cardiovasculaires, peut générer des cancers ou des troubles de la grossesse. Les fumeurs incorrigibles sont passibles d'amendes et dans certains pays, une augmentation de 10% des salaires par rapport à celui des fumeurs.

Chronologiquement, ce sont les aspects sociaux qui interviennent les premiers dans l'initiation du fumeur, notamment l'exemple des parents, de l'entourage ou des amis. Fumer donne une certaine contenance à l'adolescent: c'est le geste sympa qui donne un air viril, à l'instar des vedettes de cinéma. Alors qu'il est facile de parler des dangers du tabac aux adultes, il est plus difficile de sensibiliser les jeunes.

L'évolution du tabagisme dans les pays en voie de développement est un problème crucial. Dans ces pays, les multinationales du tabac profitent souvent de l'absence de législation adéquate pour déverser leurs produits sur le marché. Dans certains pays africains, on distribue même gratuitement des paquets de cigarettes à la

sortie des écoles pour créer de futurs consommateurs. Ailleurs, c'est l'image du cow-boy Marlboro qui s'étale sur les affiches gigantesques dans les villes et au bord des routes, un cow-boy mort récemment des suites d'un cancer dû au tabac. Une anecdote cynique qui rappelle celle de la composition du conseil d'administration du groupe Philip Morris: on ne trouve aucun fumeur parmi les dirigeants du premier groupe producteur de tabac au monde.

Une consommation arabe en hausse

Dans beaucoup de pays développés, la consommation de tabac est désormais en baisse. En revanche, le nombre de fumeurs dans les pays arabes augmente de 1 à 2% chaque année, selon une étude réalisée par l'Organisation mondiale de la santé.

Depuis l'invention de la fabrication industrielle des cigarettes au début du siècle, la consommation mondiale n'a cessé d'augmenter. Les premières études médicales réalisées en 1949 n'envisageaient pas que le tabac ait un lien avec les mala-

dies cardio-vasculaires. Aujourd'hui, le monde entier s'accorde pour y voir, sans doute possible, un facteur majeur de risque cardiovasculaire. Sur dix adultes, quatre sont «tabacomanes». Les spécialistes prévoient actuellement une mortalité de deux millions de personnes par milliard d'habitants, un chiffre qui pourrait se monter à trois millions en l'an 2000. Le tabac est responsable de 35% des cas de cancers, tous types confondus, et de 50% des cas de mortalité précoce.

Selon une étude menée par le ministère jordanien de la santé en coopération avec le département général des statistiques, 27% de la population âgée de plus de 25 ans fument. Et si les fumeurs masculins sont actuellement cinq fois plus nombreux que les femmes en Jordanie, celles-ci sont particulièrement touchées depuis ces dernières années. Une évolution due à l'émancipation des femmes, comme cela a été le cas voilà quelques années dans les pays occidentaux.

Sans doute est-il temps aujourd'hui que les autorités jordanienues prennent plus au sérieux le problème du tabac. Au-delà du renforcement des mesures existantes, une meilleure coopération entre les ministères concernés serait souhaitable pour sensibiliser l'opinion publique. Une augmentation des taxes contribuerait aussi probablement à limiter la consommation de certains.

Beaucoup ont en effet besoin de prendre conscience que s'arrêter de fumer ne signifie pas simplement diminuer les risques de maladie mortelle. Cela signifie aussi que l'on retrouve le plaisir de respirer un air pur, que l'on peut à nouveau apprécier les aliments que l'on mange, et que l'on redonne la capacité de monter trois marches sans être essouffé.

